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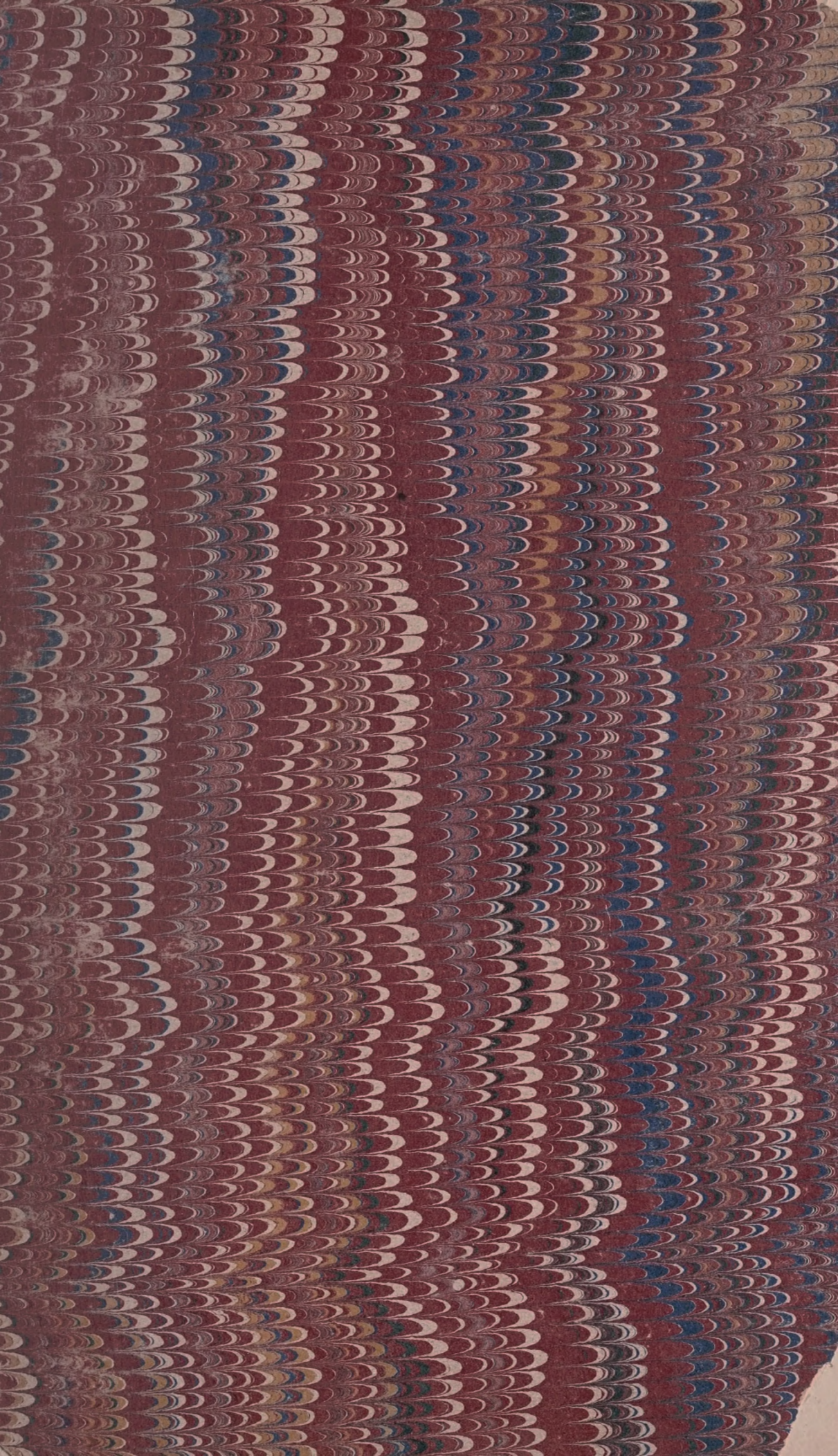
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Between Two Loves.

A NOVEL.

BY CHARLOTTE M. BRAEME,

Author of "Dora Thorne."

17 TO 27 VANDEWATER ST
"NEW YORK"

George Munro

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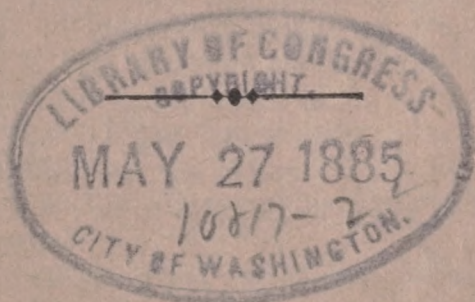
BETWEEN TWO LOVES.

A NOVEL.

By CHARLOTTE M. BRAEME,

Author of "Dora Thorne."

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" Why did you say my lip was sweet,
And made the scarlet pale?
And why did I, young witless maid,
Believe the flatt'ring tale?"



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WHEN TWO LOVES

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BETWEEN TWO LOVES.

CHAPTER I.

"WOMEN PLAY AT LOVE."

"I AM not so unreasonable as to expect much reason from a gentleman, Sir Clinton; your illustrious sex is not famed for it; but I think there are few men in the world brave enough to deny one fact."

"And what is the fact, Lady May?" inquired Sir Clinton.

"It is this: That, let what may happen after marriage, before marriage a lady should in every instance have her own way."

The gentleman looked slightly puzzled, and then answered:

"I thought ladies always had their own way through life—all that I have known have done so. My mother, than whom a sweeter, truer woman never lived, made quite a parade of wifely obedience and submission, but in reality she ruled every thought and every action of my father's life."

Lady May's answer was a rippling, musical laugh, that was sweet as the chime of silver bells, yet had in it something of quiet sarcasm that made her lover's face flush crimson.

"You laugh, Lady May," he said, quickly, "but I plead guilty to entertaining old-fashioned notions about these things. I believe that men were born to rule, to command, to govern; women to obey, to advise, to counsel—to guide, if you will—but decidedly to obey."

"It is kind of you to admit that we can guide and counsel," she replied, mockingly. "Seriously speaking, Clinton, I do not think I shall ever obey. I feel a great inclination to command, to rule, and to govern—none for submission or anything of that kind."

The handsome face of her lover grew anxious, half sad, as he looked at her. So fair, so imperious, with the pretty airs of a rebellious child added to the charm of her bewitching beauty.

Lady May continued:

"I, myself, no matter what poets say, never could admire the Griseldas of the world; they have no charm for me."

"Perhaps it would be better for you if they had, May," said Sir Clinton.

She held up one pretty, white finger, as though in warning.

"You are bound to think me perfect," she said; "and that speech sounds as though you thought me capable of great improvement."

"So I do," he replied, hastily; "at least, that is—oh, May, you confuse me, you bewilder me; first with your beautiful eyes, then

with your subtle speech. I know that my request is a reasonable one; you can not drive me from that position."

"Perhaps not, but I may lead you from it, Clinton; you know the old saying about the 'thread of silk.'"

"I am neither to be led nor driven," he said; "you are my betrothed wife, and if I object to anything you do, and there is reason in my objections, you ought to yield to me."

"And you really choose to object to my waltzing with Count Soldeni—the count with the dark, dreamy eyes and musical voice?"

"I strongly object to it, Lady May. I object, as I have told you before, to your waltzing at all."

"That is very absurd," she replied.

"Not at all," he said, his face flushing, his eyes filling with a deeper light; "not at all, May. I have won you from the world; you are the fairest, the loveliest woman in it. I have won you for my own; I have held your hand in mine; I have kissed your lips; I have called you my promised wife. I have won you by wooing you as I think no man ever wooed a woman before."

He paused, for the passion of his words overcame him. She looked up in his face.

"You are too earnest," she said, coolly.

"Oh, Lady May, do not be so cold, so cruel to me, so heartless, so unlike yourself. How can I bear it after having won you thus? how can I bear to see you waltzing with others, another man's arms round you—you, who ought only to be approached with the reverence due to a queen? When you were waltzing with Count Soldeni, I saw one of those bright coils of hair lie unfastened on his shoulder, and he touched it—he touched it with his hand, and said something laughingly to you."

"What of it?" asked Lady May, disdainfully.

The veins on his forehead grew dark, his hands were tightly clinched.

"What of it?" he repeated. "Why, for one thing, May, it opened my eyes; it showed me the fearful depths in my own nature that I did not even know existed; it showed me of what I was capable if the demon of jealousy were once aroused in me."

"And all because the poor count was kind enough to tell me, in the most flowery and gallant style possible, that one of Deval's finest efforts had come to grief; that—let me try to remember his own words—that the sun was shining on his shoulder. It was something of the kind, I know."

And again Lady May laughed musically.

"He had no right to say anything of the kind," was the angry reply. "That is why I object to waltzing. I maintain that it is a light, frivolous dance, and tends to make people forget they are strangers. Do you think that Count Soldeni would have dared to touch your hair even after an acquaintance of years, had you not been waltzing with him?"

"The cause led to the effect," she said, laughingly. "I can not see in it any reason for such high tragedy as this."

"But I do," he persisted. "You women, after all, have little feeling, Lady May—little depth of feeling. Love seems to me only a pastime with you. The mighty passion of a man amuses you; his

heart is a plaything; the fierce fire of jealousy something to laugh at. You wave your white hands and lead men into a very inferno of pain and anger. You dissect his sufferings, and take each separate pang as an extra tribute to yourselves. I say that you play at love, and know nothing of its depth or meaning."

She raised her beautiful eyes to his.

"Perhaps," she said, gently, "the day may come when I shall remind you of those words—'Women play at love, and know nothing of its depth and meaning.' You hear that I can repeat them correctly, and I repeat also that, some day or other, I shall bring them against you."

He drew nearer to her; he was so deeply in earnest that he did not perceive her mood was changing.

"Women play at love, do they, Clinton? What of those grand old stories poets tell us—are they all untrue? Did Juliet play at love? Was poor Desdemona's love play? Was Lady Russell's love for her husband all play? What of the hapless Spanish queen, who for years refused to leave her dead husband? What of those who have periled life, fame, happiness, all for the men they loved—was it all play? Was it play when Eleanor drew from the poisoned wound its venom, and so saved her king? Ah, Clinton, history, poetry, fiction, do not tell us woman's love is play."

"Times have changed," he said, gloomily. "Women used to be earnest, God-fearing, after a simple fashion; now they are, by education, by training, almost by nature, frivolous, light, vain, capricious—playing with great passions as children play with fire. Ah, May, why do you make me say these things?"

"You say them easily enough—they do not seem to cause you any great pain."

"My darling, you do not know what pain is. You will think me fierce, violent—I can not help it. I declare to you that, when I saw that man's presumptuous fingers touch your hair, I could have slain him; it was as though a fierce fire crept from my heart to my brain, and nerved my hands to do strange deeds. There is no fiend so cruel, no demon so strong, no pain so terrible as jealousy. You must give me the promise I ask, May—that you will not waltz again, except with me."

A gleam of mischief brightened her lovely face.

"If my hair should happen to fall on your shoulder, and you should touch it, it would, of course, not matter, Clinton?"

"Certainly not; when you promised to be my wife, you became all mine—that fairest of all faces, the soft white hands, every golden hair on that queenly head, became mine. No rash hand must touch you."

"It would have been better had I been made of wax; you would have placed me under a glass case then."

"You may laugh, darling, but it is no laughing matter for me. I could be jealous of the sun that shines on you, of the wind that kisses your face, of the flowers that you caress. I love you so dearly that I would take you in the inmost depths of my heart, and keep you there, shielded from every eye."

"And you would not think *that* selfish," she said, gently.

"I suppose, I imagine, all great love must, of necessity, be selfish," he replied.

"Therein also you are wrong. You have made two false accusations to-day—one is that women play at love; the second, that great love must be selfish. Now, I am not superstitious—far from it—but I have a presentiment that, in the time to come, I shall be able to prove to you both those assertions are false."

Was it a shadow of the strange, weird future that fell over the beautiful face and darkened it? The smiles faded. Lady May sat for a few minutes in deep, silent thought.

"Shall I ever tame you, my darling?" said her lover, fondly. "You are like a wild, bright forest bird—shall I ever tame you?"

"No," she replied, and in one minute the bright, gay spirit was all alive again. "When you can train an eagle, a wild mountain bird, to come and eat crumbs as the robins do, then you may tame me, Clinton."

"That will be never, but, May, we need not spend the whole of this bright, sunny day in arguing. Give me the promise, my darling—tell me that you will never waltz with any one except myself."

There was evidently a struggle in Lady May's mind; then she said, quietly:

"I can not give you the promise, Clinton; I should not keep it if I did."

She had hardly finished speaking when the door opened, and a footman entered the room. A small card lay upon the silver salver he carried in his hand.

"The Count Soldeni, my lady," he said.

"What have you told him?" asked Lady May.

"I said that I did not know whether your ladyship was at home or not, but that I would inquire."

"The answer is—not at home," said Lady May, and the servant went away.

She turned, with a playful smile, to her lover.

"Now will you call me cruel? I have sent the count, with his dreamy eyes, away."

"You are all that is charming," he replied.

She held out her white, jeweled hand to him.

"We will not quarrel any more to-day, then, Clinton. I can not give you the promise, but I will do as the newspapers say about petitions—I will 'take it into consideration.' And now I must say good-morning; you have been here two hours; I have visitors coming; the two hours have passed very quickly."

"My love—my darling, make me happy with that one promise," he said; but she laid her white hand on his lips and silenced them.

CHAPTER II.

"LET ME ENJOY MY YOUTH."

THERE was, perhaps, no prettier room in London than this boudoir in Cliffe House. There was certainly no lovelier woman than this one who refused her lover the promise he asked. Cliffe House was the town residence of the Lady May Trevlyn, the sole

daughter and heiress of the late Mordaunt, Earl of Trevlyn, the fairest girl and the wealthiest heiress in England. Those who spoke of Lady May's faults, always excused them by saying:

"What could be expected?—her mother had been one of the proudest women of the day, far too proud to see any fault in her little daughter—far too proud to believe that any child of hers could be anything except perfect."

When masters and governesses complained, the Countess Trevlyn had but one reply:

"They did not understand the Lady May, and did not manage her well."

Those who were conscientious resigned after a time; those who were not made no attempt at correction. The countess died when her little daughter reached her sixth year, and the earl cared but little for his home. Mordaunt, Earl of Trevlyn, was by no means a model peer; he preferred the gay cities of the Continent to his country seat; he preferred the gay *abandon* of Continental life to the calm, measured propriety of English life. He cared little about his native land, less about the duties that should have detained him there. He was well pleased with his little daughter, simply because she was his heiress; and the fact of having an heiress saved him from the trouble of marrying again. The estates of Trevlyn were like the title, unentailed—a daughter could succeed as well as a son. He considered that he had done his duty remarkably well. He had married, and his wife, Miss Constance Lockwood, was a great heiress; he had lived with her in peace and prosperity—they had never disputed. She had been far too proud ever to say whether her marriage was a happy one or not. Those who saw the expression of relief on her face when she heard that she had to die, said she could never have known what happiness was. Her little daughter alone caught her last words, and they were, "It is all disappointment."

Then when his wife died, the earl had buried her, and had mourned for her after the most approved fashion. He erected a stately monument to her memory; a stained-glass window in the church at Elsdene; a row of almshouses, called "Lady Constance's Bounty," were all so many tributes to her memory. He placed his daughter, after her mother's death, under what he considered proper guardianship, and then thought it high time that he should enjoy himself.

Looking back on his life, the earl was well pleased with it. As a bachelor, a married man, and a widower, he considered himself to have been without reproach. Now that an heiress was provided for his estates, he gave himself up to the enjoyment of the life he loved. He came to England at rare intervals to visit his daughter, he was satisfied to find her growing more and more lovely, and in some vague way seemed to consider there was great credit due to him for it. Of her faults or her virtues he never thought; she must be highly educated, highly accomplished; but he never said she must be good. Even this guardianship, indifferent as it was, ended when Lady May was only fifteen. The earl enjoyed himself too much; he died from a sudden attack of gout, leaving his lovely young

daughter one of the richest heiresses and one of the loveliest girls in England.

What could be expected? Nature had done much for her; she was marvelously fair of face; she was dowered with some of the richest gifts; she had a smile like sunshine—a laugh like clear, sweet music; she had a generous heart, a large, frank, noble nature, a grand soul. She was impetuous, imperious, charming, capricious, and fascinating beyond the power of words to tell, she dazzled, bewitched, and enchanted; yet she was never for two hours together in the same mood; the strange thing was, that greatly as her moods varied, each one seemed to suit her best. She was gay, laughing, animated, bright, vivacious, witty, sarcastic, all by turns. She was thoughtful, silent, and given to reverie, all by turns; she varied as the sky and the clouds vary, yet was always charming.

She had great virtues and great faults, this fair Lady May; she was by no means a flirt, yet there were times when one thought her the very queen of coquettes, her every action, every gesture had such an irresistible charm of its own.

At the age of sixteen, Lady May Trevlyn was almost alone in the world, she had a host of distant, titled connections, but none of whom she particularly cared for. By the advice of her guardians, she chose a cousin of her mother's, Miss Lockwood, to live with her, but Miss Lockwood was a mere cipher—Lady May ruled with the most absolute sovereignty.

At seventeen, she went through the ordeal of all English ladies—she was presented at court, and took her place in society as one of its greatest ornaments. It was a strange, piquant, yet almost terrible position; only seventeen, beautiful as a peri, and wealthy as a princess in a fairy tale. The whole of her mother's large fortune had been settled on her, and the inheritance of Trevlyn was in itself a grand one. All the world raved about her, as it was sure to do; she was more than passing fair, this daughter of a hundred earls; hers was not the common order of beauty; the marvelous regularity of feature, the aristocratic grace, the exquisite coloring, were the least charms of her face; its piquant expression, its varied loveliness—now grave, now gay—its thousand charms of change, its smiles and tears, its April-like loveliness, its radiance of pure beauty, could not have been put on canvas—no painter could have depicted them; her eyes were of violet hue, large, bright, full of a thousand meanings that could never be told in words; her hair was of bright, soft gold—its waving, silken abundance was a beauty in itself; her figure was perfect—its grace and symmetry were of the highest order; she had “white little hands,” and little feet. No wonder the world raved about her; no wonder that, for once, the tables were turned, and, instead of speculating what gentleman would marry her, the world wondered whom she would marry.

Surely no young girl ever had more lovers. She seemed to live in a crowd of them—she was surrounded by them; flattery, homage, adulation were all round her. She only saw the fair and bright side of life; she was praised, flattered, complimented, until she began to think that she could do no wrong. Whom would she marry?—which would she choose from this crowd of admirers? She had reached her nineteenth year before her heart was touched at all;

by that time the world, with its praise and its flattery, had somewhat spoiled her. Then the one great love of her life came to her, and her lover was Sir Clinton Adair. Perhaps, in a worldly point of view, she might have done better. Sir Clinton was a baronet; dukes and earls had asked her in marriage, and she had refused them. The Adairs of Eastwold, were an ancient, loyal, honorable, wealthy family; but nobler and wealthier men had been suitors to Lady May. This love was her fate—she had had none before it, none came after it; it was the love of her life, the one grand crown of her womanhood—she knew no other. Perhaps one of the reasons she loved Sir Clinton so well was that he was older than herself—of a graver, more reserved nature; she was unconsciously attracted by the very contrast he presented to herself.

His wooing had been a subject of wonder; she was, as he said, like a wild, beautiful forest bird, difficult to tame; it required more skill, more talent, more patience than would have been required in winning a battle.

He did win at last; Lady May owned that she loved him, and promised to be his wife. Then her goodness seemed to come to a sudden end—perhaps she had made concession enough; she became restive, and her lover, despite his massive strength and patience, had some difficulty in managing her. She was his promised wife; she loved him more than she knew; yet she would not hear the word marriage named—she affected the utmost dread of it. When he prayed and pleaded to her, she would place her white hands on his shoulder, and raise her winsome face to his. She would say:

“My youth, Clinton; let me enjoy my beautiful, happy youth; do not tease me about being married yet.”

She never dreamed that it was love which made her youth so beautiful and so happy to her, and he was as wax in her hands.

There were times when her coy, shy avoidance of love and marriage almost maddered him; yet she was so sweet and winsome in her graceful tyranny he could not resist it. He could not be angry with it. He was, indeed, as he owned to himself, wax in her hands.

Then he knew she was young to be married—he was willing to wait patiently until she was twenty, if she would only indulge him by allowing him to talk about their marriage or their future; but she would not. She was the fairest and sweetest of tyrants. The fact of the engagement seemed enough for her.

“Is it that you do not love me, May?” he would cry sometimes, when a look or word from her had silenced him against his will.

“No,” she would reply; “but, Clinton, love and marriage seem so different. Let us go on as we are—in peace.”

“But, surely,” he remonstrated once, amused in spite of himself—“surely you will let me speak to you of marriage some day?”

“Yes, certainly, Clinton,” she replied.

“And when will that be?” he asked, gravely.

“When I can not help it,” she replied, with impudent frankness, for which he did not like her any the less.

“That is the most cheering prospect I ever heard of for a lover,” he said.

It was no wonder that she, so young, so bright, and beautiful, liked to enjoy her youth and defer the responsibilities of marriage.

She liked the bright, laughing side of life best, and she had grave suspicions that marriage hid some serious cares. It was not because she failed in love for him that she disliked the mention of marriage—he misjudged her in that; it was because she did not wish to take up the cares and responsibilities of life until, as she had said herself, she was obliged.

CHAPTER III.

“WILL HE TAME HER?”

EVERYTHING goes by repression. Sir Clinton Adair had achieved the great triumph of the day; he had won the love of the fairest and wealthiest heiress in England, and with that knowledge he was compelled to be content. Lady May had no idea of making any further concessions.

“When will you marry me, May?” was the prayer ever on his lips, and she had no answer for him. So that his love grew by repression. Because his fair, imperious queen did not care for what she called love scenes, and was not willing to talk about marriage, he was obliged to suppress, in some degree, the intensity of his love. She would, perhaps, have been startled could she have known how he worshiped her, and what jealous pain lodged in his heart.

For he did not quite understand her. He had been accustomed to worldly women, who never concealed the fact that a good marriage, either for themselves, their daughters, or sisters, was the beginning and end of existence. He did not quite understand the reluctance of a girl to leave her girlhood behind her, and take upon herself the cares of womanhood.

Lady May often said to herself that she could not possibly be happier than she was. The world was at her feet; she loved and was beloved; she was supremely happy in her choice; she believed Sir Clinton to be the noblest man in the world; why disturb matters when they were so pleasant? It would be time enough in a few years to think of marriage; when she was married, she would be obliged to change her life; she must have less of laughter and song, less gayety; she would have cares that would make her graver. True, to outbalance that, she would have more love, but her heart was warm now with its happy young love; what need of more?

But into these thoughts her impetuous lover did not enter. He loved her with his whole heart and soul; he would have prayed her with his whole heart and soul to marry him at once. Her coy, sweet avoidance angered him. If he had remembered her youth, and had been more patient, more considerate, this story of a great tragedy would never have been written. But he had a man's nature, strong, half fierce, incapable of even understanding the delicate windings of a woman's mind. What was really a dainty dread of disturbing a happy, sunny life, a girlish dread of the unknown land of marriage, he mistook for want of love.

So he brooded in silence over his own great love, which grew now by repression—gradually jealousy mingled with his love. If Lady May had been more like other girls, if she had talked of their

future, if she had indulged him in pretty love *tête-à-têtes*, he would never have been jealous. As it was, he said that what he could not win no one else should have. His fair, proud, dainty love should give to no other what she refused him.

She was his promised wife yet she, in some sweet, vague fashion that he hardly understood himself, held herself aloof from him; he had kissed her face once—it was on the evening of their betrothal; he had never dreamed of kissing her again. Once he remembered laying his hand with a loving, caressing touch on her hair, and she had drawn herself coyly away from him. It was the remembrance of that fact which angered him so greatly when he saw Count Soldeni touch the fallen coil of hair. She had not shrunk from him. Sir Clinton did not understand that the shy avoidance of him was but a girlish sign of love.

Day by day his jealousy increased. It was not exactly that she gave him any cause; she could not help being fairer than other women, she could not help men admiring her and trying to win smiles and kind words from her. Yet, as time wore on, she began to take a wicked, amused kind of interest in her power over him. It gratified her inexpressibly to be so completely mistress of one human heart.

While he talked about jealousy, and warned her against flatterers, she was content. It was only when he began to talk about their marriage that she turned restive.

“My dear May,” said Miss Lockwood to her, one-morning, “the patience of that lover of yours is something wonderful. Mind you do not try it too far.”

But Lady May, secure in her youth and beauty, only laughed as she answered:

“I should like to know what he would do in that case.”

Miss Lockwood shook her head gravely.

“I know,” she said, “that on a subject like this, all interference seems to be impertinence. I do not intend my warning as such. I have known men do some strange deeds when their patience ended.”

“But,” said Lady May, “I do not see how I try his patience, auntie; tell me.”

She had a fashion of calling Miss Lockwood auntie; the elder lady preferred it.

“Tell you! I can not tell you; you must know yourself. A long time has elapsed since you first became engaged to him, yet you will not settle any time for your marriage.”

“Marriage!” cried the girl, impatiently; “people seem to talk and think about nothing but marriage. Why not leave me to enjoy a few years of my youth in peace?”

Miss Lockwood looked still more grave.

“My dear Lady May, that is not the language of love.”

“You mistake—you are quite wrong,” cried the young girl, eagerly; “I do indeed love him.” Her face flushed hotly. “Why do you make me say such things, auntie? You make me ashamed of myself.”

“My dear,” replied peaceable Miss Lockwood, “I do not make you say them; I know you are accustomed to no voice save the

voice of praise. Let me, for once, speak the truth. You promise me that you will not be angry?"

"If I am to hear the truth for the first time, I ought to be pleased with the novelty," said Lady May.

"You shall hear it. I will tell you why you dislike all mention of marriage, even with the man you profess to love."

"I do love him," interrupted Lady May; but Miss Lockwood took no heed of the interruption.

"Pride is at the root of it all, Lady May; pride, and nothing else. You like your full, free, unalloyed liberty; you like being uncontrolled mistress of all your actions; you would not like to be accountable to any one for anything you do or say; you like being Lady May Trevlyn, the wealthy heiress, the leading belle of the day; you like being able to bestow smiles and kind words upon a crowd of adorers; you are too proud to relinquish the advantages of your freedom, too proud to submit to another's will."

Lady May listened thoughtfully; then, with the frankness that made her chief charm, she said:

"I am half inclined to think you are right, auntie. I have never had to submit, and the idea of it is not very pleasant. I am willing to own that if I were less proud, the notion of marriage would be less—what shall I say?—less terrible than it is."

"I know I am right, my dear. I have studied you well. You are too proud, Lady May; and there never was a proud heart yet," continued the simple lady, "that Heaven did not bring low. It is all for pride, Lady May, that you are making one of the most honest hearts that ever beat ache with a deadly pain."

"I do not believe that," said Lady May, proudly.

"It is true, my dear, nevertheless. Sir Clinton Adair is not like the same man he was when he first loved you; he looks sad at times, like a man accustomed to repress his feelings. Interference is rash, I know; but, as you have promised to marry him, I think you might be a little kinder to him."

"I will think of it," replied the fair, proud girl, and Miss Lockwood was content. She knew that the haughty young heiress seldom made a greater concession than that.

"When you are older, you will know more of the value of such love as Sir Clinton's," continued Miss Lockwood. "You do not appreciate it just now, because every one flatters you."

"But I do appreciate it, auntie. Do you really think he loves me so very much?"

"Think, my dear! I am sure of it. If I dared, I should say that he loved you better than he loved his own soul. Too great love is often punished, as is great pride."

Lady May did think of it the next time she saw her lover; for the first time, and of her own free will, she spoke of their marriage. She did it with a flushed face, and a strange slowness of speech; but she was rewarded for the effort by the light that shone in his face.

If it was possible for his love to increase, it did so; the time came when its force almost mastered him—when its strength made him unjust, indifferent to everything. It was when matters had reached this stage that the scene occurred with which our story

opens. Lady May had been the leading belle at one of the grandest balls of the season. As she was engaged to be married to Sir Clinton, it was one of her whims never to dance more than once with him at the same ball, and, when he remonstrated with her, she said:

“People used to laugh at Colonel Dempster and Lady Creeve; because they were lovers, they only danced with each other; no one shall laugh at me.”

He knew when she took that view of a subject all words were vain. He did not like standing by while her sweet smiles and lovely face charmed other men; he submitted, but it was with an ill-grace. He watched the little episode that had angered him so. One of the long, golden coils of hair had fallen over Count Soldeni's arm, and he had touched it with a smile. That smile enraged Sir Clinton; he said to himself that he would bear this tyranny no longer, that he would resist and assert his rights. The morning after the ball he called, resolved upon winning from her a promise that she would not waltz again, except with himself. That promise he had failed in obtaining, yet he left Cliffe House more in love with her than ever—astonished, too, at his own daring in having read his proud lady-love so long a lecture.

“Will he tame her?” that was the question every one had asked, and that was the question which perplexed him as he walked home. That is the question, the answering of which forms our story

CHAPTER IV.

LADY MAY AROUSED.

THAT was the question which, by morning, by noon, and by night, occupied him. Should he tame her? Should he ever bend this bright, imperious, capricious girl? Should he ever really capture this proud, sensitive heart? Should he ever feel sure of her love?

He had tested her on this one point, and his test had failed; she would not give him the promise he asked. He was not more jealous of Count Soldeni than any one else. There was only one of whom he felt really jealous, and that was the young Duke of Rosecarn, one of the handsomest and most accomplished peers in England—one, too, who admired Lady May more than most people. He had made her an offer of marriage, which she refused, as she loved Sir Clinton—refused him, much to the young duke's amazement; but he would not give up all hopes of winning her; he heard of her engagement to Sir Clinton, but he argued with himself that all was fair in love and war—that, until she was really another man's wife, he should never give up all hope. Of him Sir Clinton was jealous, not that his proud, fair young lady-love gave him any cause; her manner, even to the young duke, was one of proud, indifferent calm. Lady May had learned some lessons of late, and learning them had changed her. One of her friends, a young French girl, had recently married, and Lady May was discussing her wedding with the Countess of Lunbar.

“I should look forward to marriage as the end of all my troubles, if I were a French demoiselle,” she said, laughingly; “married

ladies in France seem to me to have more freedom than in England; I do not hear so much of obedience and submission among them."

The Countess of Lunbar looked quietly at the girl's lovely face.

"My dear Lady May," she said, gently, "the law of marriage is the same everywhere where Christianity prevails; that law is 'submission and obedience from the wife to the husband.'"

"I think it is terribly unfair," said Lady May. "In many cases that I know the husband is greatly inferior to the wife. When that is the case, how can she obey?"

"I do not think it matters at all," said the countess, gently. "Providence, in framing that law, did not make it depend on the husband's worthiness; it is independent of all such considerations."

So, let her speak to whom she would, she heard the same story. She began to perceive there was truth in it. The time was coming when she must give up her glorious, unrestricted freedom, and learn to obey the wishes of another. She resolved upon one thing: she would obey when she was married—she would learn to yield to her husband; but, before that time came, she would enjoy her freedom to its utmost extent. She would, in everything, in every respect, and in every particular, have her own way.

"It is the happiest time of my life, and I intend to enjoy it," said Lady May to herself, and her notion of enjoyment was like that of many other ladies—it consisted in a series of triumphs over her lover. If she must obey after marriage, she would, at least, command before; and Sir Clinton found that he had full occupation in obeying the wishes and whims of his lady-love. Then, with it all, she was so fair in her sweet imperiousness, that he could not resist her. Some men would have lost their patience; there were times when his was sorely taxed, yet it so happened that, after every whim, and every caprice, he loved her still better. She wounded with one white hand, and healed with the other.

"Shall you go to Lady Browning's ball?" asked Sir Clinton, one morning.

They were riding together, and he saw how people turned with admiring gaze to look after the lovely face and matchless figure.

"I do not care much about it," she replied, carelessly; "Lady Browning is no great favorite of mine."

"I am compelled to go," he continued. "I met Lord Browning yesterday, and he would not release me until I had promised."

"Then, if you go, I shall go," she said, with a smile that seemed to her lover brighter than the fairest gleam of sunshine; a concession that charmed and delighted him so greatly, it was with difficulty he refrained from giving some proof of his happiness.

"Ah, May, my proud, peerless May, if you would speak to me a little oftener after that fashion, I should be the happiest man in the world."

She went to the ball—that was the caress; the other hand wounded. While there she waltzed again with Count Soldeni, and seemed thoroughly to enjoy it.

He was very angry, hurt, annoyed, grieved that she showed so little deference to his wishes. He found an opportunity that same evening of saying so. The night was warm, and Lady May, with many others, sought the cool, fragrant conservatories, where the

lamps gleamed with a soft, mellow light through the sweet-scented flowers; there Sir Clinton found her. She was quite alone, and he stood for a few minutes lost in admiration of the loveliest picture he had ever seen. The background was formed by flowers and green leaves. Lady May, with her golden hair, jewels shining on her white breast and circling her rounded arms—her dress of rich white lace falling around her—was something wonderful; her beautiful face wore an expression of unusual thought.

"May," said Sir Clinton, "do you not think you are very unkind to me? I ask you as a particular favor, an especial grace, not to do a certain thing, and you seem to take an especial delight in doing it."

She laughed that sweet, low laugh of hers, that stirred the blood in his veins, and made his heart beat.

"I must own," she said, with frank impudence, "that there is a certain charm in doing what one has been wished not to do."

"I think, dear," he said, gently, "that if you loved me you would think more of my wishes, and try, at least, to fulfil them."

There was a sound of pain in his voice that made her look up quickly. She saw such deep, mute reproach in his eyes that her heart was touched; the pretty white flowers fell from her hands. She rose quickly, and going to him, laid her white, soft hand in his.

"I came because you came, Clinton—only for the pleasure of being with you; do not let us quarrel, now that I am here."

The words were simple, but the smile that went with them was so sweet; the lingering touches of the white fingers thrilled him with such happiness as he had never known before. How could he do anything but worship her, so sweet and winsome, even while she was capricious and imperious?

So, between sunshine and shade, between the fever of love and the fire of jealousy, time passed until the great event of the season came off—the private theatricals of the Countess of Swandown. Every one has a mania; Lady Swandown's was for private theatricals. Every pretty girl, every handsome man, possessed of a grain of intelligence, was pressed into the service. Lady Swandown's charades, *tableau vivants*, and private theatricals, were one of the events of the season. To the great annoyance of the countess, this year a rival had appeared in her especial branch of party-giving—a pretty brunette, Mrs. Dunbar, the wife of a far-famed millionaire, who enjoyed showing her pretty, piquant face and beautiful figure in every variety of costume.

Lady Swandown's indignation was great to think that any one should seek to rival her. She determined to put forth her strongest effort, and to give such an entertainment as would effectually crush her opponent. To make this success, she must, of course, first and foremost, secure the beautiful young heiress, Lady May Trevlyn.

Without her, she knew well the whole affair would be a terrible failure. People went to parties quite as often from a desire to see the lovely Lady May as from any other motive. Lady Swandown was half alarmed; she had heard vague rumors that Sir Clinton did not care for these exhibitions, that he had expressed some very strong opinions on the point; what if he should interfere—should try to influence Lady May, and prevent her from coming? It was

too terrible to be thought of. Full of anxiety, the countess drove off to Cliffe House, and found the young heiress at home and alone.

"How fortunate I am, Lady May; you are always so surrounded with visitors that it is quite an event to find you alone. I have something so important to say to you. How cool you look in that white dress; I have never seen you look anything but cool, now that I come to remember."

"I suppose I look pretty much like other people," said Lady May.

The countess seated herself with the air of one who had plenty to say and intended to say it. She laid before Lady May the exact state of the case.

"You will not refuse?" she said, in conclusion. "You know that I am not flattering you when I say that my entertainment will be the greatest possible success if you will only take part in the play."

Lady May hesitated.

"I am not sure," she replied, "whether I *could*. I have never acted in anything."

"My dear Lady May, all women are born actresses," said the countess; "you have but to try. I thought we would give 'Romeo and Juliet' this time, or the 'Lady of Lyons,' which would you prefer?"

"I suppose it is terrible heresy to say it, but I prefer the 'Lady of Lyons.'"

"And you would make such a glorious Pauline," said the countess, meditatively; "yes, I think we must have the 'Lady of Lyons,' by all means. I am so glad it is settled. Do you know what frightened me?"

"No," replied Lady May.

"I know that Sir Clinton Adair does not approve of anything of the kind, and," continued her ladyship, with a meaning smile, "it is only natural that you should share his opinions."

Lady May's pride was instantly up in arms.

"Why should I share his opinions?" she asked, quickly.

"The reason is obvious," replied the countess, laughingly; "for the same reason, I suppose, that you have graciously consented to share his name."

"How do you know he has expressed such opinions?" asked the young heiress, imperiously.

"Because, my dear Lady May, half London—that is, our part of London—is talking about them. It appears that the question was brought on the *tapis* a few evenings since by the *habitués* of St. George's Club—Sir Clinton, you know, is a member. He expressed his ideas about tableaux, private theatricals, and all that kind of thing, in pretty strong language."

"I suppose he has a right to his own opinion, as I to mine, or you to yours, Lady Swandown."

"Most certainly" replied the countess, quickly, feeling uncertain as to how the wind was veering. "It was not exactly Sir Clinton's opinions that made me uneasy."

"What then?" briefly asked Lady May.

"It appears that after he left the club there were bets made among

the young officers—young men will do those things, you know, dear Lady May."

"What were the bets?" she inquired, quickly.

"Really, I do not think I ought to tell you, as they concerned yourself."

"Concerned me?" said Lady May, her face flushing, her eyes brightening with a proud light. "How dare any officers or gentlemen make me the subject of their bets? Speak quickly, if you please, Lady Swandown. I do not like it."

CHAPTER V.

AN ARTFUL WOMAN'S VICTORY.

LADY SWANDOWN, looking at the proud, fair face, with its hot flush of angry pride, began to fear that she had, perhaps, gone a little too far; but then, when a fashionable lady has an object to achieve, she can not possibly be exact as to a word or two.

"My dear Lady May," she replied, "if you take it in that way, I shall be afraid to tell you. It was a mere nothing, after all, only showing what importance is attached to every movement of yours. Young men are not very wise, as you know."

What was the bet, Lady Swandown?"

"Why, those foolish young men, knowing, of course, your engagement to Sir Clinton, and having just heard his strong dislike to what he was pleased to call 'all such unseemly exhibitions,' laid wagers with each other that you would not appear in them. Sir Clinton has something of the character of a brave cavalier among us, of course," continued the countess, seeing that Lady May remained silent; "it was very impertinent of them to make you the subject of a wager, but they never dreamed, of course, that you would know it."

"It was impertinent," said Lady May. "They said, then, that I should not appear?"

"They went further than that—they said Sir Clinton *would not allow it!*"

There was a few minutes' struggle in that proud heart; she was half inclined to take her lover's side, after all—her lover, who loved her so dearly, whose life was bound up in hers, who was so kind, so brave, so chivalrous. She was half inclined to think and to say that he was right. Her own pride and delicacy revolted from the notion of becoming an actress, of making the beauty of her face the means of drawing a crowd. Then, too, she really loved him, and did not care to displease him.

Lady Swandown, like the quick, worldly woman she was, saw that she had not produced the impression she wished, but rather an opposite one. She, knowing well the faults of the beautiful young girl before her, did not hesitate to play upon them.

"Of course," she hastened to add, "if there really is any such great and serious objection on Sir Clinton's part, I withdraw my prayer. We women have to learn obedience, and we can not learn it too soon."

"I am not aware that I owe obedience to any one," said Lady May; "and I can, at least, please myself whether I pay it, even when I owe it."

"Still, if Sir Clinton really objects to it, I should advise you not to do it," said the artful countess. "My dear Lady May, a quarrel is sooner made than healed."

She cared very little who quarreled, provided she attained her object, and heard her entertainment called the best affair of its kind during the season. Provided she could crush, eclipse, and annihilate Mrs. Dunbar, she would have parted half the husbands and wives she knew. If she had tried every means in the world, she could have hit upon none so certain of success as those she had employed.

"I have often given up my wishes, my amusements and pleasures to please the earl," she continued. "It is a woman's duty, I suppose; and a very disagreeable duty it is at times. It is early enough for you to practice it, dear Lady May; still, I admire you for it. The time was when ladies' whims ruled the world; the tables are turned now. Well, I shall lose the brightest star of my *fête*, but I admire your docility. Would that I could always imitate it. Women should be born without will, without mind."

"They are, many of them," said Lady May, dryly.

The countess rose, with a deep sigh.

"I should like to have seen you as Pauline," she said. "I imagine the fair, proud 'Lady of Lyons' was something like yourself. I must try to bear the disappointment as well as I can."

She moved as though intending to take her leave. Lady May sat in thoughtful silence, her face bent on her hands. The countess gave her one keen, shrewd look, then continued:

"No one will ever dare to call you proud after this, Lady May; and how mistaken all those foolish young men will be! Yet, I mistake; I remember that the majority agreed you would *not* go."

Those last words decided her; the artful, well-chosen words produced their proper effect.

"The majority were mistaken, Lady Swandown. I intend to accept your kind invitation, though I should like you not to mention my resolve."

"I will do anything you like," said the countess, her face flushing with elation at her victory. "It would, perhaps, lessen the awkwardness—I mean that it might probably please Sir Clinton, if I asked him to take the part of Claude Melnotte."

"Claude Melnotte—Pauline's lover! Oh, no, Lady Swandown; do not think of it!"

The countess laughed.

"I thought, perhaps," she said, "you would prefer that your lover should make love to you even upon the stage."

"No; you do not understand!" cried Lady May, with a hot flush on her beautiful face. Then she stopped abruptly. How could she explain? She was proud, imperious, capricious, but her love for her lover was earnest and deep. "Play at love with him on the stage! Oh, no—a thousand times no!" She shrunk from the idea as she would have shrunk from a caricature of herself. She was too deep in earnest for that. "Sir Clinton would not consent," she

replied, quietly, after reflecting how useless it would be to attempt to explain this phase of feeling to the Countess of Swandown.

"I am sorry for it. He is tall and handsome, with just the earnest, impassioned face one would naturally give to Claude Melnotte. I will ask the Duke of Rosecarn to take it. They tell me he declaims excellently. He is very good-looking, but he has not the princely air of Sir Clinton. Should you like me to ask the duke?"

Lady May looked up in wonder.

"It will not matter to me who assumes the character," she said.

"Pardon. It will naturally be of some importance; we shall be compelled to have several rehearsals, and this kind of thing leads to great intimacy. You would not like any one in the part who was not eligible in every way."

"The duke will do as well as any one else," said Lady May; but even as she spoke, a sense of misgiving came over her—would the man who loved her with such deep, earnest passion approve of such intimacy with the duke?

But the countess, having won her victory, was determined not to leave Lady May time to rescind her decision. She talked of the coming entertainment in glowing terms.

"If I were to spend my life in thanking you, Lady May," she said, "I could never express one half of my gratitude. Whenever I hear praise or approval of my efforts, I shall know that the praise is due to you."

Dress, jewels, rehearsals, were all discussed, and then, proudly elated, the countess withdrew. In the hall she met Sir Clinton, and looked defiantly at him, as one who should say: "I know your errand, and I know also that it is in vain." The countess looked at him with a wicked gleam of triumph in her eyes. She was more than usually warm in her greeting; having won the victory she could afford to be generous.

Then Sir Clinton hastened into the presence that made earth heaven for him. He saw an expression of unusual thought on the beautiful face that was his guiding star.

"May," he said, somewhat abruptly, "I met going away from you one of the people I dislike most in this world—Lady Swandown. I am sorry you receive her. She is, to my mind, one of the women who do more harm than good as they pass through life. I suppose you have heard of this mania of hers for private theatricals?"

"I have heard of it," said Lady May.

"She knows better, I should imagine, than to expect that you will take a part in them. I must confess I can not understand a lady exhibiting herself for wholesale admiration."

"But are not actresses ladies, Clinton?" she asked.

"I suppose so. Some of them are most estimable ladies; but it is their profession. With this amateur acting I have no patience."

"Should you play Romeo, if I played Juliet?" she asked, laughingly.

"I think not, darling. I should not like to play at loving you, nor should I like to say sweet words to you in public. After all, stage love-making is but a caricature."

"We agree for once," she replied. "I should not like to play at love, as you call it. All the same, Clinton, I am sorry you do not

like amateur acting. I have accepted Lady Swandown's invitation to take part in a play."

"You have accepted it?" he interrupted.

"Yes; I have promised to enact the rôle of Pauline. If you do not join in the play, at least you will come to see me?"

Then she raised her eyes to his face. She was almost startled by the expression of keen pain she saw there. He seized both her hands in his.

"My darling," he cried, "you will not do this—you can not mean it?"

"I have promised," she said.

"You can not do it; you are not all cruel—all cold. You will not trample my heart under your feet; you will not torture your—"

Her beautiful face grew pale as she listened. Proud, imperious as she was, she would that moment have given much if she had never made the promise.

"You can not mean it!" he cried. "My darling, if I had a wound—a terrible, mortal wound—how gently you would treat me—how your sweet white hands would linger on me with a loving touch! I have a wound, deeper than that given by bullet of lead or sword of steel; and that wound is jealousy—a wound so deep, so cruel, that the gentle eyes of a fair woman might weep tears over it. You are my promised wife, yet you drive me mad with jealousy. I can not help it; it masters me; it is stronger than I myself. Do not widen that deep, mortal wound, May."

"Why should I widen it? Why should you be jealous if I take part in a play?"

"Why? I have hardly words in which to tell you why. First, because for the sake of my own great love I would keep you from all vulgar eyes. I loathe the thought that men should gaze on your face, criticise your figure, your gestures, your voice—you, my darling, my promised wife!—you, my fair, white lily!—you, whom I reverence as a saint, and would fain keep in a shrine! Oh, May, you ask me why! Does not your own heart give you a thousand reasons? Mine does. You can not be so cruel, May—you must give it up!"

"I can not break a promise," she said, coldly, although his words had touched her.

"Is it easier to break a heart than a promise?" he asked, bitterly. "Oh, May, my own love, listen to me."

CHAPTER VI.

"IT SHALL BE THE TEST."

"LISTEN to me," repeated Sir Clinton; "remember I am only a mortal man, and a man driven almost desperate by your coldness and cruelty. Do you think it possible that I could endure to see any man, no matter whom he may be, holding your hand in his, saying sweet love-words to you, looking at you as though he loved you, even though it were in play? Do you think that I could bear it?"

"I think you are very foolish," said Lady May. "How many

of our actors and actresses are married; yet, if they were to think and talk as you do, what would become of the profession?"

"Other men please themselves," replied her lover. "I know my own strength, and my own weakness. I am quite sure that I could not bear that."

"It seems an absurd fuss about nothing, it is such a trifle. I wonder you can talk seriously about it," said Lady May.

"Trifles make the sum of human things. It is no trifle to me," he said. "I know that it would be unendurable. Even for actresses of whom you speak, I have often felt indignant; if you knew how men criticised them, if you heard the remarks, the jests."

"But that is in a theater; I should be in a drawing-room."

"Human nature is the same everywhere," he said, abruptly; "and if you condescend to perform before an audience, you must expect to run the gantlet of criticism. May, surely I have some influence over you; surely my wishes, my tastes, my desires are of some little account to you. I tell you that I can not endure any exhibition of this kind. Let others please themselves. I could not bear that the woman I love should take any part in plays or *tableaux*. You may think that I am unreasonable; I can not help it."

She did not reply for some minutes, and Sir Clinton continued:

"What is the first impulse of any man who loves anything very dearly—is it not a wild, nameless longing to take it away from every one where he can lavish his love on it?"

"It is unfortunate that I have given my promise," said Lady May, "as your dislike to the idea is so great; but, having given it, I can not recall it."

"You will not go!" he said. "I am sure of it, as though you had pledged yourself not to go. I am sure of it."

"Why?" she asked, briefly.

"Because I have faith in you. You would not, I am quite sure, deliberately do anything that you knew would grieve me. I have faith in you. Even if I saw you dressed, and was told that you were going to Lady Swandown's, I should not believe it. I have faith in you, my love."

She tried to laugh as she answered him, but his trust in her had touched her deeply.

"I must go," she said, "not only to keep my promise, but also to vindicate my independence. I am told that people have even laid wagers as to whether I should go or not—people who know you, and know your objections. You could not expect me to stay away after that. It would be said that I was afraid of you."

"That motive is altogether unworthy of you, and will not influence you, I am sure," said Sir Clinton. "Look at it in this light, Lady May—will you not give me the great pleasure and triumph of letting the world see you respect my wishes and prejudices?"

"I will *not* be coerced," she said, quickly. "I will do as I like."

"You shall. I will not go through the farce of laying my commands upon you; I leave my cause in your hands. I am confident that, against my wish, you will not go; I have faith in you."

"Let us forget the matter. It is a fortnight to-morrow that the affair comes off; we need not be miserable to-day. Yet, Clinton, you must not make any mistake; I shall go this time, even if I

never go again. I will not have it said with a sneer that my obedience has begun before marriage, and people would say that, I am sure."

"I repeat that I have faith in you, May. You will not hold me up to public scorn; you will not do that which you know I dislike and detest."

So it ended, neither of them feeling quite satisfied, both hoping that something or other would happen to make everything safe. Sir Clinton knew he might as well try to teach the wind which way to blow as to try to force or compel his beautiful *fiancée*; she, on her side, could not brook the idea of giving in and staying away, neither did she wish to vex or annoy Sir Clinton. She would even have been pleased if, without any compromise of her own dignity, she could have yielded to his wishes. That was the first scene—the beginning of the "little strife" that was to make all music mute—the first notes of the tragedy. The second took place some days afterward.

Lady May was tired—there had been a garden-party, and she had been the belle. She had laughed, talked, entertained a whole court of admirers. She had looked fair as a flower, bright as a sunbeam. She had been courted, caressed, *fêted*. The day had been warm and sunny. She was tired. She was half anxious, for the conversation turned so often on the coming theatricals. How many people had said to her:

"I hear you are to be Pauline, Lady May; I am going purposely to see you."

The world expected it of her. She must go. More than once she fancied she detected beneath the veil of flattery a laughing sarcasm—a light, jesting mention of Sir Clinton's peculiar opinions. He was not there; a previous engagement had prevented his going, and her heart warmed to him. How different he was, she said to herself, to the ordinary run of men; how much more royal in his bearing, more noble in his aspect—more noble, she averred, from the very structure of his views, and the great deference he paid to the purity, the delicacy of women. Her heart warmed to him. She began to appreciate the mighty, noble love that had been lavished on her. She was anxious, too, because the young Duke of Rosecarn, with delight and exultation in every feature in his face, had pursued her with his expressions of delight.

"I think I shall play Claude to your Pauline," he said. "If fortune had tried her best, she could have done nothing so kind for me."

Lady May began to think it would not be so pleasant, after all, to play at mimic love with the young duke. Then she wished Lady Swandown had never been bitten with this theatrical mania. One little circumstance had annoyed her. She was talking to Colonel Dartmore about the grand coming event, when Lady Marcel joined them, and said, in a peculiar tone:

"Do not be too sure, colonel, that you will see Lady May as Pauline, after all. A little bird has whispered some strange things to me."

"What did the little bird say?" asked Lady May, with a flush on her face.

"I must not tell; but I, for one, do not anticipate the pleasure of seeing you as Pauline."

Then Lady May thought to herself that people were talking about her lover's dislike to the whole affair, and speculating whether she would give in to him or not.

She had been invited to a formal dinner-party, but, feeling tired and anxious, she sent an apology. For once beautiful, flattered Lady May felt unequal to meeting the great world. She went out into the pretty parterre, that in London goes by the name of garden. There was a trailing cedar, a smooth, green lawn, rose-trees, and mignonette. The golden sunbeams lingered over them; the south wind idly stirred the leaves; the sweet, shining heavens had no clouds; the birds were singing in the trees—it was so different, this sweet, holy calm of nature, from the tumult and turmoil of the world. There, under the shade of the trees, listening to the sweet, jubilant music of the birds, her heart warmed again to her lover, and the thought of the theatricals became almost distasteful to her. She was roused from her reverie by the sound of his voice, and she knew that he was by her side. One gleam in his face showed her also that he was unusually agitated.

"May, my darling," he said, "I have heard it! I was struck dumb! Then I said to myself that I would come and ask you how such a story had arisen?"

She looked at him long and earnestly before she spoke. There were strange lines in that dear face—lines of pain—and the girl's heart reproached her; she had brought them there.

"What story is it, Clinton?" she asked, with a sure foreboding of what was coming.

"They tell me that not only are you going to these theatricals, but that the Duke of Rosecarn, who is my rival—who has, a score of times, publicly avowed his determination to win you from me if he can—the man, above all other men, of whom I am jealous—they tell me that he plays the part of your lover on the stage. Is it so, May?"

"I can not help it," she replied, the more impatiently, because she felt that her cause was a bad one. "You can not expect me to tell Lady Swandown that you are jealous of the duke. I have refused to marry him because I love you. What need is there for jealousy after that?"

"I will not believe it, even though you admit it yourself. I have faith in you—you will not betray that faith. I refuse to believe that you could be so wantonly, so needlessly cruel."

"And I think you needlessly foolish to make so much of what is really so little. You have placed me in a most embarrassing position. Do you know that people are positively discussing whether I *dare* go after your publicly expressed opinion? Why did you say so much about it, Clinton?"

"Why, indeed? Because I believed the woman who loved me would have sacrificed a little selfish amusement to please me."

"It is not a question of selfish amusement," she answered, proudly. "It is this—it is a question of my obedience to your wishes."

"Well?" he said, for she paused abruptly.

"Well," she continued, looking in his face with a smile so beautiful and winning that his heart melted within him—"well, I am not one of the obedient kind, as you know."

What more could he say or do? Words, arguments, entreaties were all in vain. Still, he could not bring himself to believe that she would really go, when he had expressed such decided opinions.

"It shall be the test," he said to himself, as he watched her—"it shall be the test. She says she loves me; she treats me coolly. There are times when I think she cares for me, and times again when I feel sure she does not. This shall be the test. If she loves me, she will not go; if she goes, it will be that she does not love me. And if it tears the heart from my breast, I will give her up—I will leave her. I will marry no woman who does not love me. I will not be a dupe or a slave."

Yet he loved her so well, so madly, that even as he said these bitter things to himself, his eyes were dim with tears. Then he felt that she was near him—yes, she was standing there, with a pretty moss rosebud in her white fingers. She fastened it in his coat.

"Every breath of that perfume is a message from me," she said.

And he kissed the sweet white hand, saying to himself over and over again, that she would never do this thing, which she knew would vex and grieve him.

CHAPTER VII.

LOVE AND PRIDE.

THE wicked world enjoys lovers' quarrels. No one knew how the story spread, but before long every one was talking about it, telling, with laughing faces, that Lady May was going to take a part in the play, and that Sir Clinton was not willing. Wagers were laid pretty freely. Hopeless lovers, who detested Sir Clinton because he had won the beautiful heiress, fancied there was a gleam of light. If she persisted in going, it might lead to a quarrel—if they quarreled, parting might follow; and if they parted, there was most certainly a chance for some one else. No one dared to speak to Sir Clinton about it. With all his geniality and pleasant manner, there was something of haughty reserve. The ladies, too, were interested in the question; it had a peculiar personal application for all of them. It was a matter of obedience and submission. Most of them could remember such struggles in their own career, and they looked on with amused interest. They knew that whoever won in this case would be master for life.

Would Lady May go, or would she not? For such a trifling matter, it was wonderful how much discussion was excited. A struggle for supremacy is always amusing—this was piquant. Would she go? Some declared that she had assisted at the rehearsals—that they had seen the superb costumes; others declared that Lady May had abandoned the idea, and the countess was in despair. When any one ventured to make inquiries of the young duke, he looked radiantly happy, and said, "Wait until the evening comes." It was but a trifle, although it affected three lives; and it was marvelous what intensity of interest such a trifle excited.

Sir Clinton wondered in after years how he had endured the suspense of those few days. He loved May with such depth of worship, such intensity of affection, that his love was almost a pain to him. He had no thought but for her; he had no other idea, no other interest in life. She was the whole world to him. Nations might decay, kings rise and fall—he had no world, he had no interest. Looking on the face he loved, he forgot all else. He had loved her with the same passionate love from the first moment he saw her, and he would so love her until he died. He said to himself that even after death he must love her, for his love was more than mortal.

He knew he had gained a wonderful victory in winning her—that others were envious and jealous. He had felt supreme scorn when people said he was marrying her for money. One hair of her beautiful head was worth more to him than all the money in the world—one glance of her lovely eyes, one sweet word from her lips, outweighed all riches. “Loved her for her money!” He laughed at the notion. He loved her for her own beautiful self, and nothing else. He would have married her had she been the beggar-girl and he King Cophetua.

He knew it was not the world’s way to love in this mad, earnest fashion. He knew that those who were envious of him were not capable of understanding his love—he hardly knew its depth himself; but when he tried to estimate it, it frightened him.

One day, when a little group of his friends were discussing the beauties of the day, one turned to him:

“You have carried off the belle at last—at least, you intend carrying her off. Lady May Trevlyn is the comeliest girl in London. I suppose it was her beautiful face that won your heart.”

Was it? Long after that little group of friends had dispersed, he asked himself the question, “Was it the face he loved?” No! He said to himself that if she lost her beauty, if disease or accident robbed her of it, he should love her just the same. It was not for her beauty alone; he could not tell what it was for. He only knew that in all the wide world she was the one woman for him—that no other face was fair, no other voice sweet, save hers. He loved her so, that if she had bidden him die for her, he would have died with a smile on his face. He would have lavished all that he had on her—he would have given her his life and all that it held; but his great love did not unman him. With it all, he would not be a slave.

If she had bade him, for love of her, thrust his right hand into the flames and hold it there, he would have done it; but in her acting love scenes with another man—consent to doing that, which he had earnestly, resolutely, honestly forbidden—that would he not do, come what would!

He was in a fever of anxiety. Would she go, or would she not? When he asked her, she looked at him with calm, serious eyes:

“Of course I am going, Clinton. I told you so from the first.”

He began to despair. This was his test, and he seemed to be failing.

“May,” he said, one morning, “I have been thinking of a story I read once. I can not remember the name. In it there was a girl,

like yourself, beautiful and beloved. There was a hero, too, whose merit was mine—the passionate love he had for his *fiancée*.”

“It is not uncommon,” she said, with a smile.

“But listen, dear. The girl was beautiful, light of heart, easily led; and she, just as you have been, was pressed to take a part in some private theatricals. Her lover forbade it.”

“Forbade it?” repeated Lady May.

“Yes; men know how to command. He forbade it. She resisted, and he told her to choose between her pleasure and himself—that if, against his wish, she persisted in going, they must part.”

Her face grew pale, her eyes flashed proudly.

“He was insolent,” she said.

“Not at all. As her accepted lover, as her promised husband, he had his rights; he was not insolent in enforcing them.”

“How did it end?” she asked.

“How do such stories generally end?” he asked, mournfully.

“It ended as you may imagine. Women, I tell you, only play at love. She went, and he kept his word—he left her, and never spoke to her again.”

“Without doubt she married some one else, and lived happily ever afterward,” said Lady May, with averted face.

“Without doubt,” he repeated, bitterly. “A little accident of that kind—a broken engagement, a ruined life—is not much compared to the amusement of an evening.”

Suddenly Lady May looked up at the grave, handsome face of her lover.

“Clinton,” she said, “is your story an allegory? Does it veil a threat?”

“I really read such a story, May. But now let us suppose—only suppose—that ours was such another case, that we came to a similar issue—that we were to part if you insisted in outraging my wishes—if you knew that your going to that play would part us, should you go, Lady May?”

“Yes,” she replied, proudly; “I would go if I knew that my going would prevent you from ever speaking to me again.”

“Then you do not love me, sweet.”

“That does not follow. I will not be threatened. The Trevlyns are not cowards, you know. Threaten me! Why, I would go now, Clinton, if I knew that I should die there!”

She looked so royally beautiful in her pride and scorn, he could only love her.

“Do you, in all good faith, make that threat, Clinton?” she asked.

He hesitated.

“I can not,” he said, hoarsely; “I would if I could. I can not lose you, May. May, you hold my life and soul in your hands; I can not lose you. You will not go. You are only saying these things to tease me; you do not mean them. Oh, if I loved you less—oh, Heaven, if I loved you less!”

“Do you love me too much?” she asked, gently.

“Yes, a thousand times too well, too dearly for my peace, my happiness, or my salvation! My love is my torment; it is a fire that burns me, a fever that never cools, a pain that never grows

less; yet, my darling, I would not be without it. It may drive me mad, it may kill me, but I would not be without it!"

She was startled by the vehemence of his words, touched by them.

"Why do you make such a storm over nothing, then, Clinton?"

"My darling, it is not what you call 'nothing.' If it were the mere yielding of my will to yours, I would yield it freely, as I would my life. It is really my manhood which is at stake. I have said so much against such things, I have expressed my opinion of them so freely, that for my promised wife to take a share in them will at once proclaim to all the world either that she has no respect for my opinion, that I have no influence over her, or that she does not love me."

"And if I stay away, it will proclaim to the whole world either that I have no will of my own, or that I am frightened of you."

"It would only be a graceful act of deference to my judgment, May."

"One," said the proud young beauty, "that I do not intend to pay. Acts of deference are not my forte. Miss Lockwood says I shall be terribly punished for my pride some day. I tell her that I am willing to take the punishment."

Oh, terrible, fatal words! In the dark after years, in the time of her shame and humiliation, when the bright head was bowed to the dust, they rose in terrible witness against her.

"You say you love me, May—you have promised to be my wife—yet you would rather part from me than give in?"

"Certainly," she replied.

The word sounded harsh, cold, cruel; but there was a love light in her eyes, a smile on her lip, a something in her face that seemed to say she cared for him. He was uncertain, irresolute; he knew not what to say, what to think. Then he seized her hands in a passionate clasp, the memory of which lingered with her long.

"I will not believe it, May. You love me; I am sure of it. No woman could be so fair and yet false. You will not go. I have all faith in you, my love—all faith. I could lose my life sooner than lose my faith."

Then he left her. He could say no more; his heart was full. And she, when the door closed behind him, had a swift, sweet impulse. It was to call him back, to throw herself in his arms, to tell him that she valued his wish more than all the world; that she would obey it, and give up all idea of going—a sweet, swift impulse; but she did not yield to it. Pride came to the rescue.

"Not even for him should the world say she submitted—she who was admitted to be prouder than most. No one should say that she had yielded to her lover's wish; no one should laugh at her for want of spirit or want of pride."

And before she saw him again, Sir Clinton was suddenly summoned to Paris, where one of his oldest and dearest friends lay dying. He had not even time to say good-by to Lady May.

CHAPTER VIII.

LADY SWANDOWN'S FÊTE.

BUT Sir Clinton wrote, and his letter was a prayer that she would do as he wished. He did not know when he should return, but he hoped that his absence would not extend over many days; and in the meantime, he told her, he should rest secure in her faith and loyalty. She might like to tease and frighten him, but he felt sure she would not show herself to the world, with the Duke of Rosecarn as her lover, even though it were only in the mimic love-making of the stage. He said that he believed it—he tried to make himself believe it—he would admit no doubt, no fear, no suspicion. It must be so; to think anything else would simply madden him. He would only be absent two or three days, he thought, and on his return he would win the promise from her.

He went, trying hard to believe in that which he most wished; but he could not return so soon as he had hoped to do—his dying friend required so much attention, he had so many affairs to attend to for him, that it was utterly impossible to get away. He had two letters from Lady May. In them she made no mention of the theatricals. They were kindly written—tender, womanly letters—and his heart grew warm as he read them.

She did care for him; she would not write such sweet words if she were cold and indifferent. It would be all right; she would yield to his wishes; she would not go; and, perhaps, on his return, he should be able to persuade her to marry him. He buoyed himself with sweet hopes; he would not admit the possibility that anything could go wrong.

It was a strange coincidence, he thought, that in returning he should reach London on the very evening of Lady Swandown's famous party. He said to himself that his darling would not be there—his proud, fair, imperial love, she would not be there, and he would drive first of all to see her.

Some of the interest had died away when it became known that Sir Clinton had gone to Paris. Some laughed, and said openly that the dying friend was only an excuse—that he had gone to avoid the ignominy of a defeat.

Lady May said nothing. Whether her lover's absence was a relief or not, no one knew. She kept her own counsel. One thing was, however, certain—he had chosen the most efficacious means of making her think about him. If he had been on the spot, pleading his own cause with all the eloquence he could use, he could not have found any argument so persuasive as the fact that he had gone away, trusting in her faith and loyalty.

Yet she could not give in. Miss Lockwood, who knew the whole story, refrained from speaking, because she knew that any opposition would increase the danger. So the brilliant, beautiful, courted young heiress went on her way, and no friendly hand was raised to show her that it led her to ruin.

Lady Swandown ignored the fact of Sir Clinton's opposition. The Duke of Rosecarn was Lady May's most humble, devoted servant—indeed, his servility contrasted with the proud independence of her lover; yet, strange to say, although she was rebelling against him—refusing to acknowledge that she owed him any obedience—she gloried in his exacting it. So contradictory is the fairest and most charming sex, that she would have despised him had he been like the Duke of Rosecarn.

Between Lady Swandown and the duke she was engrossed—there was every detail of dress and jewelry to arrange. She could not help feeling flattered when she was told by the countess that she had been compelled to refuse more than a hundred applications for invitation.

“And I am quite sure,” said the countess, “doing full justice to my own attractions, that the great desire is to see you, my beautiful Pauline.”

A few days afterward, the countess showed the beautiful young heiress a note from one of the royal princes, saying how much he should like to see Lady May Trevlyn as Pauline. Lady Swandown laid it before the young heiress with the air of one who has nothing higher to offer.

Surrounded by flattery, homage, compliment, laden with honor, the whole world of fashion intent upon her, it was no wonder that she forgot the consequences that might ensue.

She did own to herself once or twice that it was a good thing Sir Clinton was away—it prevented unpleasant scenes; and she did own also that she hoped, much as she wanted to see him, he would not return until it was over.

“If he does not see the performance,” she said to herself, “he will care less about it;” and then she decided that, as he felt strongly on the matter, she would never have anything to do with private theatricals again.

She could not draw back now, she argued. Matters had gone too far, when even a royal prince had expressed a desire to see her; she must go on with it. Yet she knew in her own mind that it was not so much the gratification of her vanity as the proud, rebellious spirit within her, that refused to submit, that scorned all control.

So the night came, and its brilliant splendor still lingers in the minds of the guests. Lady Swandown's magnificent suite of entertaining rooms were crowded with the *élite* of London. More than one royal duke honored her with his presence. A more brilliant, select, or imposing throng had not been gathered during the whole of the season.

As a matter of course, the star of the night was the Pauline; the charades were good, the tableaux perfect in their way, but the star of the *fête* was Pauline. It is not often that one sees a perfectly beautiful woman. Lady May was perfect, and when her beauty was enhanced by the picturesque dress and costume of the “Lady of Lyons,” she was something wonderful to behold.

Accustomed as she was to homage, she had never been so courted or so flattered as on that night. People raved about her; on all sides she met with nothing but compliments, homage, admiration. It was a night to be remembered—a dream of lights, flowers, jewels,

smiles, music—all that the earth has of the brightest and fairest—a night to be dreamed of for years afterward. The Duke of Rosecarn was beside himself with enthusiasm and delight; every scene in which he appeared with the beautiful Pauline was rapturously applauded. The only regret he felt was that the play was not a reality.

The splendid pageant was ended at last. Lady May, tired with the unusual exertions, but beautiful as a houri, was standing in the brilliant little room they had called the greenroom. She was satiated with compliments; the royal dukes had praised her as even they seldom praise. His Grace of Rosecarn could not leave her.

"I have but one regret," he said, in low, passionate tones—"only one regret, and it is that the play is not a reality. Oh, Lady May, Lady May! I would work as Claude Melnotte worked—I would be peasant, soldier, anything, for your sake!"

"You must not talk nonsense to me," said Lady May, with a keen distaste for the situation. No matter what was said on the stage, off the stage it seemed like an act of disloyalty to listen to his grace's love-making.

"Nonsense?" he repeated; "it seems to me the finest sense in all the world, Lady May. I shall never forget to-night; and if you never say another kind word to me, either in jest or earnest, I shall at least have been happy once. I shall never lose the memory of this night. I have been in paradise, and it is something to have been there, even if the gates are barred for evermore."

"Nonsense again," said Lady May. "It is not very Christian-like to call the stage paradise—indeed, I call it decidedly heathenish."

"It was your words and smiles that made my paradise," he said. "You may be cold and cruel to me for the remainder of my life, if you will, but you have been kind."

"Clinton was quite right," thought Lady May to herself—"this amateur love-making is very bad for any one."

"I shall keep the memory of your voice in my ears," he continued, "long after you have forgotten the words you uttered. Lady May, I have been very happy; I wish life were one long play."

"It is one long farce, I believe," she said, laughing. But he grew more serious.

"You shall not laugh my sentiment away, Lady May."

"I must not remain here, your grace, listening to this nonsense any longer," said Lady May.

Before she knew what he was doing, the young duke had seized her hand, and kissed it with passionate fervor. She drew back, flushed, proud, angry, and, raising her eyes, saw the pale, angry face of her lover.

In one moment, with a woman's true tact, she had grasped the situation—for one moment, too, her heart misgave her, as she saw the scorn in those proud, dark eyes. She advanced, with outstretched hands:

"Clinton!" she cried; "when did you return?"

But he did not touch the proffered hand. She hardly recognized his voice as he spoke.

"I am sorry to disturb a very interesting *tête-à-tête*," he said; "I

owe your grace an apology. Can I say a few words to you, Lady May? I will not detain you."

He had just sense enough to read tragedy, not comedy, in the pale face before him. He turned to quit the room, and the lovers were alone.

"Clinton," said Lady May, "what is it? You seem so different, your very voice has changed—what is it?"

She stood under the light of the lamp which fell upon her beautiful upraised face and glittering jewels. She held out her hand to him again.

"You are welcome home," she said; then her voice died away in a frightened murmur.

"I will not touch your hand," he said hoarsely. "Is that the hand the duke just kissed? I came home this evening, and they told me you were here. I did not believe it—fool, madman that I was! I did not believe it; but I came—I, the man who loves you—oh, great Heaven!—who loves you better than life. I have stood there while that man clasped you in his arms, ranted and raved over you, drank in the heaven of your eyes, the fragrance of your lips, while he spoke such words to you as I have never dared to utter. Tell him, tell him from me, to take what he has touched, for I will not! Tell him from me that you belong to him, and not to me!"

"Clinton," she said, "listen to me."

She tried to take his hand in hers, but he drew back from her with such haughty pride in his face she dared not even touch him.

CHAPTER IX.

"YOU HAVE SLAIN MY LOVE."

"You are unjust to me," she said, and there was something of unusual humility in her voice quite foreign to her; "you are unjust, Clinton."

"I am not. I go away from you—nothing less than death would have caused me to go. I left you, trusting in your faith and loyalty. True, you have said nothing, written nothing—you gave me no promise, but I trusted in you. I hasten home—what is the first thing I see? Not the woman who should be soul of my soul, who should have shared my sorrow; no loving face waiting for me, no voice to bid me welcome. I find my promised wife before the admiring eyes of a crowd, I see her clasped in my rival's arms, I hear passionate words exchanged between them, I see glances that make my heart burn and set my blood on fire. 'All play,' of course—stage love-making. I come away from the stage and find the same thing going on. My promised wife, her beautiful face all alight, her eyes bright as her diamonds, and my rival, no longer on the stage, making love to her still—telling her he would be peasant or soldier for her sake, kissing the white hand that has crushed my heart as a child crushes a flower."

"I could not help it—I could not indeed, Clinton. I told him he was talking nonsense, and I was just going. I am not to blame."

"I say that you are; but I am not here to quarrel—words are quite useless now. You told me if you had to choose between parting from me and giving up these plays, you preferred the parting. I did not believe it then. Heaven help me! now I see that it was true. I am only here to say good-by."

"Gooy-by!" she repeated. "Nay, you can not mean that. You would not surely make a serious quarrel about such a trifle."

"It is no trifle to me. You have shown every one that you do not care for me; you have gloried in showing how little you cared for or valued my opinion. We will part before worse happens."

"Listen to me, Clinton."

"I will not. You may try to bewilder me with the sophistry of your words; you might dazzle my sense, you will not convince my reason."

The pride of her haughty nature, dormant during those few minutes of fear, began to assert itself.

"You are at full liberty to do as you please," she said; "indeed, the most sensible course we could pursue is to part. You are a tyrant—I like freedom. We are unsuited to each other. You are narrow-minded; you would reduce everything to certain given rules—you can not do it. I am glad to part. My engagement with you has been a mistake, a burden, from which I hasten to free myself!"

She uttered each word with quick, passionate scorn. He drew back amazed. If he had thought she would humble herself to him he was mistaken. She became but the prouder for that which would have softened a less proud nature. Without another word, she slowly drew the engagement ring from her finger and gave it to him.

"You will find some other hand for that to fit," she said, with slow, cruel scorn; "it was always rather small for me."

Then they stood for a moment looking at each other in silence.

Sir Clinton said, slowly:

"Good-by, beautiful dream of my life—farewell to all my hopes and wishes! I have loved one false as she is fair; she has wounded me, as false women do wound, to the very death. You would have been kinder to me, Lady May, had you taken a dagger in your little white hand and stabbed me through the heart."

"That would have been murder," she said, slowly.

"And you have murdered me. You have slain my love, and my love was my life. When I go out from your presence, I go into the very darkness and coldness of death; I leave my life behind. You have done your work well, Lady May."

"Lady May! Lady May!" cried several voices. "Where are you?"

She roused herself like one in a deep dream. She seemed hardly to understand what was going on.

"I must go," she said, slowly.

"I will not detain you, Lady May. His grace is, doubtless, impatient. I have detained you too long. Farewell!"

All his soul was in his eyes as they lingered on her. Perhaps one move of her white hand, one sweet, humble word, might have

changed the course of both lives. As it was, she turned haughtily away.

"The duke is, at least, a more agreeable companion than yourself," she said, with a little mocking laugh.

That was her last word. He took out with him into the coldness and darkness a picture of her as she stood there, the light falling on her golden hair and lovely face, shining on her jewels, gleaming in her dress; he saw her proud, bright eyes, the curl of the proud, sweet lips, the haughty figure, drawn to its full height—a picture that maddened him with its marvelous beauty and queenly scorn. Another moment and he was gone. It seemed to that proud beauty as though a cloud had fallen over her; her face grew pale as death.

"Clinton!" she cried, with a strange gasp. Then she said to herself: "No; I will not call him back, and, if he came, I would not speak to him."

There was another demand for Lady May, and again she roused herself, with a sigh—with a strange feeling that something terrible had happened to her in a dream. The Duke of Rosecarn was by her side, speaking to her in a low, hurried voice. At first she could not distinguish his words; then they fell distinctly on her ears.

"I have not told any one that Sir Clinton was here," he said. "I thought perhaps you would prefer it so. No one seems to know he has been."

"Why should I prefer it?" she said; "his visit will not be a secret. Plenty of people must have seen him come and go."

"No one appears to have recognized him," said his grace. Then he had tact sufficient to say no more. From the expression of her face, which belied her words, he knew that he had done right, and had done what pleased her.

It was all like a dream—she could not realize that it had passed. There was no time for thought. One of the royal dukes had consented to remain for the grand banquet, with which the evening was to close, and Lady Swandown wished the beautiful young heiress to sit by him.

"You are the star of my entertainment," she said; "you must not cease shining yet."

So Lady May, with that strange, numb feeling at her heart, the same dreary daze of brain, sat by the duke's side, and throughout that long, magnificent banquet she was the very source and center of all attraction. She had never been seen to greater advantage; she was animated, brilliant, and witty; pointed repartees, brilliant sarcasms, dropped from her beautiful lips. The duke said afterward that there was no woman in England so fair or so clever as Lady May Trevlyn.

Looking at her, no one would have thought that she had just broken her lover's heart, and destroyed her own happiness. It was like a dream to her; she had not realized it yet. From the glittering lights, the gleam of jewels, the crowd of fair faces, her lover's face, white and haggard as she had just seen it, looked at her; but she turned away with a shudder. It was all fancy; she must not think yet of what had happened; she must wait until she reached home, until she was alone; then she could think as she might.

Lady May was queen of the *fête*. As people drove home they

talked about her; they said to each other that she was perfect in her loveliness and in her grace; that she was proud, but then that was only natural—a beauty and a great heiress, pride did not seem so completely out of place with her.

They talked laughingly about the Duke of Rosecarn, how he seemed to worship her. Some wondered why she should have preferred Sir Clinton when she might have been a duchess; others said there was no comparison between the two gentlemen, and that she had chosen wisely.

Then there was a confused rumor of Sir Clinton having been seen in the greenroom; some affirmed, others contradicted it. The world was satisfied on one point—Lady May had taken a part in the play, without caring much what Sir Clinton thought or said about it. Evidently he would not be the ruling power. Gentlemen laughed, and said it was easy to see which sex held supremacy, after all. Ladies felt a secret sense of elation—they had a right to their opinions, after all. So the brilliant *fête* of the season came to an end. Lady Swandown was amply satisfied; everybody praised and complimented her; the fashionable journals all declared it to have been the event of the season. Mrs. Dunkar was completely annihilated—her efforts sunk into insignificance; and the countess owned to herself that she had Lady May to thank for it all. That a human heart had been well-nigh broken, a life marred, the seeds of a terrible tragedy sown, my Lady Swandown was sublimely indifferent—her object was achieved, and she cared for nothing else.

It was not until Lady May sunk back among the soft cushions of her luxurious carriage that she realized at all the events of the night. Then she drove the memory of it away; she would not think of it. Why spoil so fair an evening with so dark a memory? Time enough yet to recall all he had said and done. Yet it went with her, that white, despairing face. She looked out into the sweet, soft, dewy night—it was there; she looked up to the golden-gleaming stars—it was there. It pursued her, haunted her. She saw it even more plainly when her eyes were closed.

Home—there was Cliffe House, and lights in the hall. Miss Lockwood, contrary to her usual custom, was sitting up for her. Lady May would fain have swept past her to her own room. Her strength was giving way a little. She had worn her mask well and bravely, but it was slipping now. Not much longer would she be able to talk with bright smiles and laughing eyes.

“Are you up, auntie?” she asked. “What a reveler I am! I believe the dawn is breaking in the skies. You should not have waited for me.”

“My dear May, I was anxious and uneasy. Have you seen Sir Clinton?”

“You need not be anxious or uneasy over him,” she replied.

“I thought perhaps he would come here with you. I could not rest for thinking of him—he startled me, May.”

“He startles a great many people,” she replied, trying to laugh; but the laugh died away on her lips, and they grew strangely white and chill. “Why did he startle you, auntie?” she asked.

“My dear, he drove straight here from the railway station; he had just come in from Paris, and he had taken nothing—no food,

no wine; he came here at once, expecting to find you at home." Miss Lockwood paused, and looked at the beautiful face before her. "He looked bright and hopeful when he came in. 'All alone, Miss Lockwood,' he said; 'where is Lady May?' I told him, and he stood quite still, with a look upon his face as though I had wounded him. 'I can not believe it,' he said, at last; 'she would not go there.' Then, when he knew it was true, he cried out: 'I will follow her!' I begged of him to take something, he looked so white and strange, but he would not."

"That proves he was not hungry," said Lady May, trying to laugh; but the sound was not pleasant to hear, and Miss Lockwood looked up anxiously to her.

CHAPTER X.

LADY MAY'S REMORSE.

"HAVE you seen him, May? There was something in his face—I could not tell what—which frightened me. Have you seen him?"

Lady May turned carelessly away; she knew that her face would belie her words.

"I did see him, but only for a few minutes; there was a great crowd, and it was such a glorious evening. I must tell you all about it to-morrow—it was Fairyland!"

"But, May, tell me about Sir Clinton; he interests me, not the party. Tell me, was he cross?"

"Do you suppose he would show it there even if he were?" was the evasive reply. "Why should he be cross?"

"You should not have gone, May; he prayed you not to go. You may laugh at me if you will, but I saw something in his face that frightened me. You should have complied with his wishes."

"My dear auntie, I shall always please myself. Those who are foolish enough to expect submission or obedience from me will always be disappointed. I am sorry you have been anxious—I am sorry that you have sat up for me. To-morrow I will repay you, by telling you all about our entertainment."

She walked quickly away. It was failing rapidly now, this artificial strength of hers. Her lips were quivering, her hands trembling; something seemed rising from her heart as though it would suffocate her.

She passed on quickly to her own room. Her maid, Duval, was waiting. She looked up in wonder at the face of her young mistress.

"Fetch me some wine," said Lady May; "I am very tired."

Her maid hastened away. Then she was alone, and her terrible misery, her awful sorrow, looked her plainly in the face at last. She flung up her white arms, with a wild cry.

"Great Heaven, have pity on me!" she said.

She had lost him, he had gone from her, never to return. A dark mist came between her and the light. She cried out again; and when Duval returned she found her beautiful young mistress lying where she had fallen, with her face to the floor.

She had lived too long among fine ladies, as she phrased it, to be either surprised or alarmed. She raised her, opened the window, and let the cool night air play upon her; she bathed her hands and face in sweet, fragrant waters. When Lady May opened her eyes, the maid hastened to reassure her.

"I am afraid I was too long in bringing the wine, my lady. You are over tired."

But even as she spoke, she said to herself that it was not fatigue that dimmed those beautiful eyes and made the beautiful face colorless. Duval was discreet. It was not her first situation, and she flattered herself that she understood "fine ladies" as well as she understood the art of hair-dressing.

"Make haste," said Lady May, "and take these things away." She pointed impatiently, as she spoke, to the diamonds and flowers, the magnificent dress she had worn as Pauline. "Take them away," she repeated; "I am quite tired of the sight of them!"

"That means," thought Duval, "that she has quarreled with her lover."

She hastened to obey without comment.

"Duval," said Lady May, as the maid was about to quit the room, "you will oblige me by not mentioning my slight attack of faintness to any one. I dislike all fuss about health."

"I will not name it, my lady," said the discreet maid, who understood the whole matter by instinct.

And then Lady May, the most beautiful, the most admired and courted woman in London, was left alone with her sorrow. He had gone away; he had left her. He had spoken sharp, cutting words of reproach to her; he had spoken with scorn and contempt.

"Let him take what he has touched."

She shuddered as she remembered the words—those cruel, scornful, terrible words; and now he was gone.

For the first time she realized her own great love for him—all falsity, all sophistry, all illusion was put aside. She understood that in defying her lover, in outraging his sense of what was due to him, in sending him away from her, she had destroyed her own happiness entirely. She had preferred her own pride to him—she had indulged it at the expense of his happiness; and now only her pride was left to console her.

She rose from the pillow that was full of thorns for her; she knelt on the ground, and, with her face buried in her hands, she wept as women weep but once in life—such tears as never can be forgotten. She had done it all herself; there was no one else to blame. It had been in her power to make him supremely happy, to pay him the highest compliment that lay in her power, to show her deference for his opinion, to show the world that she respected and esteemed him—all this had been in her power, and she had failed in doing it. Looking back, she did not wonder that he had rebelled against the indignity she offered him. It was all over now—he had gone, and, if she read his face aright, she should see him no more; so the sun of her life had set in darkness, and she was alone. Grief had its way; she spent the long hours that night in lamenting him—she would have given all she had to undo what was done; but it was irrevocable, she could never undo it. She mourned for him, she

wept for him passionate tears, she called him with passionate cries. She struck the little white hand that the Duke of Rosecarn had kissed—struck it, and bruised it. She could have bruised the lips that had said such cruel words, the face that had looked at him with such cruel pride. Then she said to herself that she must preserve her pride—no one must know the secret of their parting or of her sorrow. The morning sunbeams found her kneeling still upon the floor, her face swollen and stained with weeping. It was the warm, bright sunbeams falling on her that roused her from what was really the half unconsciousness of grief.

She rose from the floor, and, catching a glimpse of herself in the mirror, hardly knew her own face.

“This will not do,” said Lady May. “I have had my own way; I have driven him to desperation—driven him from me. Tears are of no avail—I must pay for my pride.”

But all the scents and essences on her toilet-table would not remove the trace of tears. Then the proud young heiress sent to say that she would take breakfast in her own room. No one must see the trace of those tears, lest they should know they had been shed for him.

She said to herself that she would shed no more; everything else had gone from her—she would at least preserve her pride. But even when she had taken breakfast, and two hours of the sunny morning had passed over, her face still retained traces of tears—it was pale, and her eyes were dim.

“I can say my head aches, and, in good truth, it does—my heart, too. No one will wonder at my being tired after last evening.”

She went down to the drawing-room, where Miss Lockwood sat with her fancy-work.

“I was not surprised to hear that your head ached, May,” she said; “you were very late last evening.”

“Yes; but the hours flew so swiftly, auntie, they had golden wings. Now I must tell you all about it.”

“Before you begin, my dear, let me ask you one question—where is Sir Clinton?”

Mechanically enough the girl repeated the question:

“Where is Sir Clinton? ‘Am I my brother’s keeper,’ auntie, that you ask me in such solemn tones?”

“Hush, my dear; never lightly use Bible words. Where is he, May?”

“At home, I suppose; perhaps fast asleep.”

“He is generally here before this time,” said Miss Lockwood; “and, do you know, May, they have sent from his house to see if he were here, or if we had news of him. He sent a telegram, telling them to prepare for him, and he has not been there.”

“Has he not been home all night?” asked Lady May, surprised out of her cool assumption of indifference.

“I should imagine not, by that inquiry. Did he say anything to you, May—was he going back to Paris, or anything of that kind?”

“He did not tell me so; I only saw him for a few minutes. He looked tired, and not very amiable.”

Miss Lockwood glanced wistfully at her.

“I know how proud you are, May,” she said, “and how you

dislike all questions; but I must say what is on my mind, even at the risk of displeasing you."

"Say what you will, auntie; you are privileged. I should never think of feeling displeased, as you term it, with you."

"Then, May, I have an impression—I can not tell why—that something has happened to Sir Clinton. I know you will keep your own secret, but I shall always think there was a quarrel between you last evening. You defied him so openly; I believe your pride has driven him to desperation, and he has either sought or met with some terrible misfortune."

"Why do you think so?" asked the girl, in a voice quite unlike her own.

"You will smile when I tell you, but I believe in these things. During the night I was startled from my sleep by hearing his voice—Sir Clinton's voice—crying out for help. It was no fancy of mine; I heard it plainly as I hear my own voice now, and, unless we hear something of him to-day, I shall be miserable."

Lady May had risen from her seat; the color had faded from her face, leaving it as white as the face of the dead. There was a terrible fear in her eyes, a quiver as of deepest pain on her lips; then she said, slowly:

"Even at the worst—supposing that we had quarreled—you do not think he would be so mad as to destroy himself? He is a man, auntie; men are not such cowards."

"He is a man, and, as I have often told you, May, an exceptional one. I have seen much of life, I have known many love affairs, but I have never seen anything like Sir Clinton's love for you. It was painful in its intensity, and what he would do if there should ever be any quarrel between you, I can not tell—something desperate, I am sure."

"Auntie," cried the miserable girl, "I am frightened! Keep my secret—I am frightened! You must never tell—we quarreled and parted last night. If anything has happened to him, I shall kill myself!"

"Hush! my dear. I feared that it was so."

"You must keep my secret," she cried, passionately; "no one must know. I shall keep up my pride before every one else, but not before you—I can not do to you, because you loved him, too. We quarreled and parted. He could not forgive me for being in that stupid play, and I was proud to him. We parted, and now—oh! auntie, I am so miserable that I wish I were dead." She sobbed with passionate grief. "I shall suffer enough; you must never reproach me, even by a look. How shall I bear it? and it is all my own fault."

"Let us hope matters can be set straight. Write to him, May, and tell him that you are sorry. He will be here as soon as he reads the letter."

But the young heiress shook her beautiful head.

"You do not know all, auntie—he will never come back to me; but send—do send to his house to see where he is. Send from yourself, not from me."

And the answer was, that Sir Clinton's housekeeper had received

a letter, telling her the house could be partly closed, for her master would not return for some time.

Miss Lockwood asked where the letter was from, and the answer was that it had been posted at the Euston Square railway station.

The two ladies looked at each other, and Miss Lockwood wiped the tears from her kindly eyes.

"Heaven bless him and comfort him wherever he is!" she said; but Lady May did not dare to say "Amen."

CHAPTER XI.

ON THE WRONG TRAIN.

PEOPLE soon tired of asking the question, "Where was Sir Clinton Adair?" The general impression was that he had gone abroad, though why he should have preserved such mystery over it no one knew. The fashionable world made some very keen guesses as to the truth of what had happened, though no one knew it for a certainty. One thing was quite evident—Lady May's engagement was broken. She was free—whether by her wish, or by his, or from mutual consent, no one knew. It was broken; Lady May was free—free to be wooed and won. There was a great stir among the fortune-hunters, great delight among her admirers. After all, she had a right to please herself, and no one knew the rights of the story. Lady May lived her life as well as she could. The one thing upon which she was more intent than any other was saving her pride. No one must know that she cared for his absence; no one must know that she suffered pain—that she mourned for him—that she admitted to herself her life was spoiled. She went more than ever into society; she was never alone. Driving, riding, at ball, opera, or *fête*, one could always see Lady May the very queen of society, the most beautiful, the most popular—always to be seen with a crowd of lovers and admirers, always lovely, imperious, always fascinating, bright, and capricious, always the center of gayety, untiring in the round of pleasure, never wearied of it. Who could believe that a sorrowful, aching heart was hidden underneath this radiant exterior? Who could have guessed all this was but assumed, to hide the reality of a deep and bitter pain? True, there were times when the gayety and brilliancy would die away from her—when the lovely face would grow pale, the eyes dim with tears—when she would fling herself, with a passionate cry, on "auntie's" neck, and moan out that she wished she were dead, that her life was so full of pain she could not bear it; and Miss Lockwood, with kindly patience, listened to her, and tried to comfort her.

"It would all come right in time," she said, "when Sir Clinton came back. Lady May must write to him—she must tell him she was sorry. He would be only too glad to renew the engagement."

But Lady May shook her beautiful head, and refused to be comforted.

"He would never forgive me," she said; "it is useless thinking of it."

But Miss Lockwood hoped for better things, and she made her promise most solemnly that she would whenever Sir Clinton came back, ask him to forgive her.

"You did so cruelly wrong, dear," she said. "I am not reproaching you; but no man, who had any manhood in him, could have borne what you tried to make him bear."

So Lady May promised that, whenever her lover came back, she would tell him that she was sorry, and ask him to forgive her.

When he came back! but that time was long in coming. He did not seem likely to come back.

The gay, bright season ended. People left town, and went to their different destinations. A summer came and passed, autumn faded into winter, and there was no news of Sir Clinton. Lady May prompted Miss Lockwood to write to Eastwold, and inquire if he was there. The answer was that they had not the least idea of his whereabouts; he had not been home for some months, nor did they know when to expect him. Then Miss Lockwood wrote to his bankers, and there came a brief reply, to the effect that they did not know Sir Clinton Adair's address.

Winter passed; spring came round again; once more the London season was in full life. Lady May, more beautiful than ever, was once more queen of that brilliant world. But there came no news of Sir Clinton—he seemed to have disappeared from the face of the earth.

The young Duke of Rosecarn seemed to think that he had a chance now, and he never left her when it was possible for him to keep a place by her side. People began to look upon their engagement as settled. One or two of the papers had already announced that there were rumors of a marriage between the Duke of Rosecarn and the beautiful Lady May Trevlyn—reading which Lady May grew very scornful, yet was too indifferent to see that it was contradicted.

"Shall you ever marry the duke, May?" asked Miss Lockwood, suddenly, one day.

The young girl looked up quickly.

"How cruel you are, auntie! You know that I have had but one love, and there is but one man I shall ever marry."

"And if he never returns?" said Miss Lockwood.

"Then I will live single for his dear sake—I will live and die loving him, and no other. I shall meet him in another world, and he will know then how true I have been to him; how I loved him in spite of all my faults; how I repented of my pride, and my scorn, and my cruelty. I shall meet him as true wives meet their husbands—my heart free from any love but his."

"Do you really love him so well, May?" asked Miss Lockwood.

"I never knew how well I loved him until now—until I had lost him. Then it all came home to me, and I knew what I had done. My heart is with him wherever he may be."

"Poor child!" said Miss Lockwood, caressing the golden hair with her hand; "poor child! it is a hard fate."

"I deserve it; it is all my own fault. I drove the noblest and best man in the world from me by my absurd pride. I deserve to suffer."

"How you have altered!" said Miss Lockwood, musingly. The girl's whole face brightened.

"Do you think so?" she cried, eagerly. "I am so glad that you do. I have tried hard to change my whole nature—to be less proud, more humble, more considerate for others. And do you really think I have succeeded, auntie?"

"I do, indeed."

And then Miss Lockwood began making to herself a vivid picture of what time would do. Her favorite, Sir Clinton, would come back, and they would be reconciled. Then there would be a happy marriage, and there would be no drawback to the felicity of the two people she loved best on earth. A beautiful picture; but how was it to be realized? Sir Clinton did not return.

Where was he? People were tired of asking the question. Lady May had exhausted all conjecture. She knew that he was living, because Miss Lockwood had ascertained that his bankers had sent two different sums of money to him. They assured her, with all possible politeness, that they did not at present know what part of the world he was in, that the money had been sent to a Parisian bank; but that whenever Sir Clinton forwarded them his address they would at once send it to her; and with that Lady May had to be content. Two years had passed since the night of that quarrel and parting—the question still remained unanswered, "Where was Sir Clinton Adair?"

He had gone out from her presence that night mad with wounded pride and wounded love, mad with jealousy. Had he been less brave he would have walked to the river, and flung himself in. He was not weak enough, not coward enough for that; but he was mad—the fire of his love, the cruel fever of his jealousy, maddened him. When he stood out in the starlight, he swore to himself that he would never look upon her fair, false face again—that, come what might, he would never utter one more word in her presence. People who saw him in the street moved quickly away, believing that he was mad. He raised his hand as though appealing to Heaven above for justice, then walked on moaning, as he remembered that that fair, false girl could never do justice to him. It was the amazed looks of the passers-by that caused him to stop and ask himself where he was going—what he was doing? A policeman recognizing, with the instinct of his class, an aristocrat, touched him on the arm, and asked him if he were well. The man started back in affright as the dim, haggard eyes looked vaguely at him.

"Well? Yes; I am well," he replied. "What do you mean?"

"People are all looking at you, sir; you are talking to yourself, and seem much excited."

"Excited!" cried Sir Clinton, with a wild laugh; "that is a tame word. I am mad—a woman has driven me mad. There, do not taunt me, do not seek to detain me, or I shall kill you!"

He spoke so fiercely that the policeman started aside and let him pass. He looked after him, saying to himself:

"He is quite right; if ever a man was mad he is the man."

"Where are you going?" said another voice, and this time it was a big, burly porter, who saw Sir Clinton stagger and look as though

he would fall. "Where are you going, sir?" he repeated, stretching out his arm to save him from the fall.

"I do not know," was the vague reply; and the porter looked earnestly at him to see if it were wine or folly. He, too, started back in wonder at that white, haggard face, with its wild eyes. "You are ill, sir," he said; "let me take you home."

Then Sir Clinton came to his senses. This would never do; he must control himself, or people would really believe him mad. He was quite close to the Euston Square railway station then, and he did not pause to wonder how he had walked so far in so short a space of time. During that pause his mind was quite made up. He would go at once to Eastwold, and he would never, while he lived, go near London again. He decided rapidly enough what to do.

"I have been ill," he said to the porter. "I have had great trouble, and it has driven me half mad. I am better now. I want to write a letter; then call a cab for me, and I will go to London Bridge station."

He went into the nearest hotel and wrote his letter, the letter to his housekeeper, saying that he should not return to the town house. Then he flung the delighted porter a sovereign, and went off in the cab.

London Bridge, sure enough. The train for Rilton was about starting. He would take that. He would go home to Eastwold, and die there—he could do nothing else. He spoke so indistinctly that the railway officials seemed to have great difficulty in understanding him.

"Rilton! Riverton!" repeated the clerk. "I do not understand you, sir."

And the consequences of that mistake led to all the subsequent events of his life. He never looked at his ticket; he did not even hear the directions given him by the porter. He saw the open door of a first-class carriage, and he went in. He sat like one dazed until the train reached Riverton Junction; he did not even notice that all the people were leaving the carriages. A porter, looking in, said:

"Riverton Junction! Change here, sir, for Nutford and Skilton."

"Riverton!" repeated Sir Clinton. "I took a ticket for Rilton!"

"You have come by the wrong train, sir! Rilton is on the other line."

It was a slight mistake; but the rest of his life was influenced by it.

CHAPTER XII.

DAISY ERNE.

It was nearly midnight then. The stars were shining in the sky; the night wind was filled with odors from a thousand flowers; the wild roses shone like pale stars in the hedges; the song of the birds was hushed; the sweet, holy stillness of night lay over the land; yet there was no calm to that fevered, tortured spirit. Sir Clinton walked out of the great gates of the railroad station without the

least idea where he was going, or what next to do. His sole idea was that he must seek relief in constant motion, or he should go mad. He walked on, all unconscious where he was. In the dim light he saw, stretching out before him, the high-road. It was skirted on either side by green fields and tall trees; the wind murmured through them; the green boughs swayed to and fro like giant arms; it seemed to his delirious fancy that they mocked him as he walked rapidly along.

He never asked himself where he was going—whither his walk was tending. He never thought how it would end, or anything about it. All he did was to walk on under the light of the stars, saying to himself that a woman's pride, a woman's folly, had driven him mad!

Quite mad! Should he ever be himself again? Would he ever laugh, talk, take an interest in life again? It seemed to him impossible—his life was all over, all ended. A woman's folly had driven him mad.

"I, who thought to do such great deeds—who meant to lead such a noble life, I am slain by the falsity of a woman!"

Mile after mile along the quiet high-road, mile after mile, until, from sheer physical fatigue, his limbs ached and his steps faltered. He did not think of rest or of stopping, and so the night wore on.

What was that dazzling his eyes? A gleam of crimson and gold in the eastern sky—a great crimson flush and streaks of gold. He shaded his eyes as he looked at it; then, what did it recall to him, those flashes of crimson and gold? They brought to his mind the lovely face of a fair, proud woman, with the light gleaming in her jewels, and in the rich, shining folds of her dress—a radiant woman, with luminous eyes, who stood proud and scornful, haughty and defiant—the woman who had broken his heart, driven him mad. He walked on, turning with a sick shudder from the eastern sky.

Then, from out of the light, as it seemed to him, he saw people coming. He would not meet them; they were only travelers on the great highway, but he would not meet them. Perhaps they would stop him, as those other men did, and say that he was ill. He did not want any one to see him, to speak to him, to observe his haggard looks.

To the left lay what looked like a large forest. He saw a mass of trees, and a narrow lane (with a stile at the end of it) led there. He went down the lane and climbed over the stile; there was a narrow path which seemed to lead through the woods. It was then the first faint tremble of dawn. The dew lay on the grass and on the leaves; there was a faint, sweet stir, as of coming day. One or two little birds, more adventurous than the rest, uttered a few faint notes.

He walked on, his strength failing fast now—that almost giant strength which comes of madness and despair—catching at the low boughs as he passed, but never stopping to lean against the trees. There was a strange numbness in his brain; he had almost forgotten why he was there. What had happened—what had driven him mad? He was startled every now and then to find himself crying aloud; the sound of his own voice frightened him. More than once the glowing eastern sky seemed suddenly to dip down and touch

the tips of the trees. Suddenly, too, the earth would seem to slip from beneath his feet; then one foot caught against what seemed to him the broken stump of an old tree, and he fell, with his face on the grass. He could remember a feeling, almost of relief, that he had lain down to die; then a sudden terrible twinge of pain, in trying to turn round that he should not die with his face on the ground, and then he remembered no more.

No more. The birds woke and began to sing; the sun shone brightly; the wild roses, the woodbines, the busy bees, all began their summer day; but he lay, amid the grass and the fern, driven to death by a woman's falsity and a woman's pride.

How long—that he never knew. He was not conscious of being found; of a fair face, full of pitying anguish, bending over him; of sweet eyes brimming over with tears; of little hands trying to raise him; of muttered words of sympathy and sorrow—he was blind, deaf to it all.

Then, some time afterward, strong arms raised him, and he was carried away—not dead; no, he was not dead. They could feel his heart beat faintly; he was not dead. They carried him to the pretty little cottage by the woodside, where the widowed Mrs. Erne lived, and she, standing at the cottage door, had said:

“Bring him in—we will do all we can for him. Heaven send us all friends and deliverers in the hour of our need!”

He knew nothing of it all. He was carried upstairs, and laid on the little white bed, in a little white room, where the roses peeped in at the windows, and the woodbines climbed round the frame—a bright, cheerful, airy room, full of sunshine, and flowers, and light. Kindly hands laid him on the little bed; then the summer day rolled on.

He could not tell at first how he became conscious, but he remembered a peculiar feeling of warmth, comfort, and rest. Then he opened his eyes, and saw the pretty, white bed; the pretty, white room. He would have spoken, but that he seemed to be stricken dumb. The next thing that he noticed was the open window, with its wealth of roses and woodbines; then, near the window, the face of a young girl.

Such a face—so fair, so sweet, so holy—he had seen in the pictures of saints—pure, meek, transparent. He saw soft bands of fair, shining hair; blue eyes, calm as a summer's lake; a face all fair, save where the dainty rose-flush touched the cheeks and lips. It might have been the face of an angel—the old masters painted such. The graceful head was bent; he could not see what she was doing; then a mist came over his eyes, and he saw no more. He remembered no more until he felt the gentle touch of soft, kindly hands, and he became dimly conscious that the young girl was kneeling beside him, talking about him to some one else.

“He can not hear me,” she was saying; “I wish he could. Oh, mother, how different he is to every one else—to all the men we see here!”

“My dear Daisy, we only see gamekeepers and shopkeepers. I lived among the true gentry once, and this poor, wounded stranger is a gentleman.”

"A gentleman!" repeated the young girl called Daisy; "I have often thought I should like to see a real gentleman."

"You see one now," said her mother.

Then there was silence for some minutes. He felt his hand taken between two soft little ones, and gently stroked.

"What a white hand, mother!" said the same soft voice again. "Why, see! mine is quite brown near it. This hand has never worked, has never been stained with labor. See, how beautiful! I thought such hands as these only belonged to ladies."

Then there was another little pause, as though the mother had to think before she answered. Then she said:

"You must be careful not to say such things, Daisy, when any one can hear you."

"Of course I shall not, mother."

Then she raised the dark, clustering curls from his brow.

"What beautiful hair, mother; it is soft and fine like a woman's; see, what a wave runs through it. Ah, I wonder whose darling he is? Some mother or sister is wondering where he is now."

"Perhaps he has a wife, Daisy."

Daisy looked at him with musing eyes.

"I do not think so, mother. He does not look as though he were married."

"How can you tell, child?"

"I do not know how I can tell, but I am quite sure of it. I never understood why—I know some things by instinct. Will he get better, mother? Poor boy! poor boy! How hard it would be for him to die, he is so handsome and bonny!"

"The doctor will be here soon—Robin has gone to fetch him; then we shall know whether he is likely to live or to die. You must pray for him, Daisy; I believe more in prayers than in doctors. I am going to make the tea."

The elderly woman left the room, and sweet, simple Daisy, kneeling by his side, began her prayers.

He did not remember that, in all his life, he had ever heard any one pray before, and he listened to those sweet, simple words with wonder that bordered on fear. Praying for him! Had any one prayed for him, he wondered, since his mother died?

Then it was Daisy's turn to look startled, for suddenly she saw two dark eyes looking earnestly in her own.

"Who are you?" he whispered.

"I?" she replied; "I am Daisy Erne."

He said the name over and over again to himself—"Daisy Erne." He was not quite capable of collected thought yet. He said, suddenly:

"Who is Daisy Erne?"

"I am Daisy," she replied, "and this is my home. You wonder how you came here?"

"Yes. How did I come here? I do not know you, Daisy Erne. You have an angel's face, but it is quite strange to me. Have you come down from the stars?—have you white, swift wings?"

"No; I am only Daisy Erne."

Suddenly she seemed to remember that she was holding his hand

with both her own. She dropped it as though it burned her; then, fearing he would think that unkind, she touched it gently.

"You are very ill," she said. "Do you know how ill you are?"

"No," he replied; "it seems to me that I am in a heaven of warmth and comfort. Where I am, and how I came here, is all a blank."

For the time, it was all a blank to him. He did not remember his pain, or the cause of it. He could only realize that, after an intensity of agony, he was at rest.

"I found you," said Daisy, in a low voice—"myself I found you."

"You found me! Was I lost? Where did you find me?"

"I was going through the woods, and you were lying across the path; your foot had caught in the tangled branches of an old tree. I was afraid at first that you were dead, and then—"

"And then?" he repeated, for she had paused.

"Then I tried to raise you, and I could not; so I went to the other end of the wood, where the men were at work, and they carried you here."

"What was I doing in the wood, Daisy?"

She looked at him half frightened.

"Do you not know?" she asked.

"No; it all seems blank. What brought me there? Let me think."

He buried his face in his hands, then suddenly cried out:

"I remember—oh, great Heaven! I remember. I had been driven mad!"

CHAPTER XIII.

DAISY'S PATIENT.

DAISY looked at him with frightened eyes.

"Mad!" she repeated. "Ah, me, how terrible! Have you been mad?"

"Not as you know the word," he replied. "I was sane enough yesterday. Do not be alarmed at me, Daisy. I have never been in an asylum—I am not mad after that fashion; but a great sorrow came to me, and it darkened my reason for a few hours."

"Was the sorrow death?" asked Daisy.

"No; a thousand times worse than death—but I can not talk about it. Where am I, Daisy?—where is this home of yours?"

"It is but a little cottage, and we call it Woodside," said Daisy.

"I live here, alone with my mother and Robin."

"Who is Robin?" he asked.

"My brother," said Daisy, "and he's gone to find a doctor for you."

"I shall not need a doctor," said Sir Clinton.

He tried to move, and cried aloud with the pain that movement cost him.

"You must not stir," said Daisy; "you do not know how badly you are hurt. Your ankle is broken—Robin says so; but the pain is numb at present. Do not try to stir."

He lay quite still, wondering if what she said were true. Then, as thought and reason became clearer, he began to perceive it. Hot thrills of pain seemed to clasp him with an iron hand—pain that deepened and grew greater every moment. It was so bad, at last, that it forced a moan from his lips. Daisy bent her innocent head over him.

"I am so sorry," she said; "I wish I could bear half or all of it for you."

Simple, almost childlike words; but they soothed him. It was very sweet, after all, to be cared for—to be spoken so gently to.

"If I am very ill, you will stay with me?" he said.

"Yes—my mother and I. We will take care of you until you are well."

Then Mrs. Erne came in with the doctor—a shrewd, kind, clever man. He examined his patient carefully.

"This is a bad accident," he said; "your ankle is broken in two places. How did you fall?"

"I do not remember," said Sir Clinton.

"No," chimed in Daisy; "he does not remember anything about it. He says some great trouble had driven him mad."

The doctor looked attentively to him. He saw that his patient was a man of condition. He noted with keen observation that he wore an evening dress, and had some valuable diamond studs.

"You have had a great shock," he said.

"Yes," replied Sir Clinton; "it was a terrible trouble, a great shock. It drove me mad for a few hours, and, in trying to walk it off, I fell—that is all."

"A very comprehensive all," said the doctor. Then he said to himself that the trouble had been caused by a woman—he could not guess how or what.

"There never was trouble yet," thought the cynical doctor to himself, "but that woman caused it. I am afraid," he said, "that you have met with a very painful and disagreeable accident. I have a theory of my own about pain."

"What is it?" asked Sir Clinton.

"I think that if any one has severe mental pain, that physical pain relieves it, distracts the mind, takes off the attention, does good in a thousand ways. You have had a trouble that for a few hours had driven you mad, you say. You will forget it in the pain of your broken ankle. It is broken in two places," continued the doctor, "and you will have a great deal to endure. You were walking when you fell; then you are near home, I suppose?"

Sir Clinton looked at him half dazed. Near home! What a dream it seemed! London—Eastwold! What a whirl of thought! Then the picture of that London drawing-room, crowded with people, all watching, all admiring his promised wife; and then the picture of that other room, where she stood under the light—fair, proud, radiant.

"Home," repeated the doctor, not liking that vague expression—"you are near home, I should imagine?"

"No," said Sir Clinton; "I am far enough away."

"Would you like me to send for any friends?" he asked again.

“No,” was the reply; “there is no one for whom I should care to send.”

“Poor fellow!” thought Daisy. “What is the use of his being a gentleman if he has no one to care for him? How strange, too—so bonny and so handsome! I should have thought that many people loved him.”

“How long shall I be ill?” asked Sir Clinton.

“I am afraid,” said the doctor gravely, “that it will be many months before you will be able to walk again.”

“It does not matter,” said Sir Clinton, with a deep sigh. “If it had not been for Daisy here, I should have lain on my face and died in the woods.”

“It was an especial mercy from Heaven,” said the doctor, reverently; “and we must imagine that as your life has been so strangely preserved, it has been preserved for a purpose. I can wish nothing better for you than that you may live to work that purpose out.”

They little dreamed, on that fair summer’s day, while the sun shone, the birds sung, and the lovely roses peeped in, what shape that life would take.

Then came an interval of intense agony for him, while the shattered bones were reset—pain so great that while it lasted he forgot the pride and scorn, the love of Lady May. When it was over, great drops of agony fell from his brow. The doctor, looking on, thought to himself, “Which pain does he find it most difficult to bear—a broken heart or a broken ankle, I wonder?”

He gave him a sleeping draught; then, when his patient had fallen into a deep slumber, he turned to Daisy and her mother.

“I must not disguise from you,” he said, “that you will have a long, terrible task. This gentleman will be ill and helpless for months; you had better have a nurse for him.”

“No,” said Mrs. Erne; “it seems as though Providence had sent him especially to us. We will nurse him—Daisy and I.”

“He could not be in better hands,” said the doctor. “Do you know anything about him—who he is, his name, or where he comes from?”

“No,” replied Daisy; “we know nothing except that I found him lying there in the woods, and when I asked him what took him there, he said that trouble had driven him mad.”

“Perhaps he has lost his fortune,” said Mrs. Erne.

The doctor smiled quietly, with a surer divination of what his trouble had been than those simple women possessed; then he said:

“Even if he has lost a fortune, he has still a small one left, in the shape of diamond studs and a diamond ring. You will not let him want for anything, Mrs. Erne? He seems to have money, but we will not touch that until he gets better.”

“We are very poor ourselves,” said Mrs. Erne; “but we will do our best for him.”

Promising to be there to-morrow, the doctor left them to their task.

Midnight had long passed, and the dawn of another day brightened the skies, when Sir Clinton awoke—awoke to find the fair, pure face of Daisy Erne bending over him. He felt ill indeed then,

the pain of his broken limb was great, the fever high, his lips parched with thirst.

"Give me something to drink," he asked.

She gave him something in a glass that refreshed him wonderfully.

"That is my mother's favorite lemon tea," she said; "the recipe for making it has been in our family for many years."

She half raised him in her strong, white arms as she spoke. He felt that he could have rested his head on that kindly shoulder, and have wept like a child.

Then, an hour later, she brought him tea. She bathed his hands and face in the most clear, delicious spring water, and she placed a great vase of roses where he could enjoy their fragrance.

"You are a capital sick nurse," he said, faintly.

"Am I?" asked Daisy, with a pleased little smile. "I think all women are by nature."

"Nay," he replied, "all women are not. I know some too proud and too lofty ever to think of such things."

"Then they are not true women," said Daisy, naïvely.

As she stood there, blushing and smiling, her pure, fair face brightened with his few words of praise, he contrasted her with that other woman who had broken his heart—the one all tenderness, simplicity, and sweetness; the other all pride, hauteur, and beauty. The very extremes of womanhood—sweet, simple Daisy, and proud Lady May.

"I wish, Daisy," said Mrs. Erne one morning, "that you would ask the gentleman his name; it is so awkward always saying 'he' and 'his.' Do ask him."

Sir Clinton was very ill that morning; the excess of pain had made him feverish. When Daisy bent over him, and, in her soft, cooing voice, asked him would he tell her his name, he seemed at first barely able to understand her; then, in a low voice, he said, "Sir Clinton."

Daisy knew nothing of titles; even the word Clinton was new to her. She thought he said Mr. Clifton, and she told her mother that their patient's name was a very pretty one—it was Mr. Clifton.

"I should not have been surprised," said Mrs. Erne, "if he had been a nobleman—he looks like one."

"I am glad," said Daisy, musingly, "that he is not a nobleman, he would have seemed so very far above us."

"So he is now, child," said Mrs. Erne—"as far as heaven from earth."

Sir Clinton was slightly amused when he heard that new name given to him—Mr. Clifton. Evidently these kind people, who were doing so much for him, had no idea of his rank; therefore it was not from deference, either to rank or title, that they were so kind. Then, in his own mind, he formed a romantic little plan—he would never tell them who he really was, but he would confer almost endless benefits to them; they should always think of him as Mr. Clifton, the gentleman they had nursed and cared for. He grew to like the name, it fell so sweetly from Daisy's lips; it was pretty and musical. He liked it, too, because it never reminded him of his

past life. To have heard himself called Sir Clinton by the sweet lips of a pretty girl would have been a shock to him.

So he decided in his own mind to remain unknown. More than once the doctor asked, curiously, whether he would not like to communicate with his friends. The answer was always—no; he preferred being alone and in peace. He saw that Mrs. Erne and her daughter were poor. He called the mother to his side one day when they were alone, and made arrangements with her. He told her that the doctor thought it probable he should be there for some months yet, and he should like to set her mind at ease. Then he made her such a liberal offer that the poor woman's eyes shone with wonder.

"That is a great deal to give me every week," she said. Then a shadow of anxiety came over her face. "Pray excuse me, sir, but are you quite sure you can really afford it?"

He smiled at her simple notions, remembering that the house-keeper at Eastwold had just such a sum for her wages. So it was settled; Mr. Clifton was to have the sole use of the little parlor and bedroom, and the mistress of the house was to give him all the care and attention possible.

"I should be quite willing," thought Sir Clinton, "to live and die here;" but fate had something else in store for him.

CHAPTER XIV.

DANGEROUS INTIMACY.

THE months that followed were like a resting-point in Sir Clinton's life; he suffered terribly, and was quite unable to walk. How many long weeks he spent in that little white room he soon ceased to count. He watched the flowers fade, the red roses droop one by one and die; he watched the woodbines fall, he saw that the tints of the sky grew more dull; he watched the bright summer fade into autumn—the song of the birds ceased. He knew that the corn was growing ripe in the fields; he heard Daisy speak of the fruit that was ripening in the trees, and still he was unable to move. The autumn faded, and the winter set in. Lying there, he watched the snow fall, he heard the wailing of the wind among the great forest trees; he knew that outside all was bleak and cold. It was not until the spring began to come that he could walk out, and much had happened before then. Lying there, often alone, thinking his own thoughts, indulging his own dreams, he was better able to estimate his love for Lady May. He saw that it had indeed been his life—that of his love slain, so cruelly slain, nothing remained to him; he saw that he had loved her with a devotion passing the love of men. He had staked his whole life on this one issue, and it had failed. He felt little interest in getting well. What was he to do? He did not care to go out into the world and take his place in it again; the little room was a haven of rest. He wondered himself that he could not, in some measure, forget her; every minute, sleeping or waking, her face was before him; every minute her voice sounded in his ears. Once he startled Daisy; it was in

the summer-time, when he lay so very ill. She stood near the window, where the sunbeams fell on her, and seemed to crown her with gold; they brightened her fair hair and face until they made her look like the proud lady he had seen under the light, with her golden hair and shining gems.

"Daisy! Daisy!" he cried, in a voice of sharp pain; "come away from there!"

She looked up in wonder.

"Come away," he repeated; "do not stand there in the sunlight. I—I can not bear it."

She was too gentle and patient to ask him why. She thought he was irritable with long illness and great pain. She crossed the little room and came over to him. She had a sweet, simple fashion of speaking to him, as though he were a sick child who required humoring. He was ashamed of himself when he found it soothed and comforted him.

"You must take this, dear," she would say, when he was disinclined for his medicine or food.

She had a pretty fashion of taking his hand and stroking it until he complied. She was like a young mother with a suffering child—always sweet, always tender and patient, always considerate of him, always thinking of him. He grew at last to rely entirely upon her. He became so accustomed to her, that he was uneasy when she was away from him; no one could do anything for him like Daisy; no one could make such broth, such tea, such soup; and Daisy, when it was time for him to take it, would kneel by his side, telling him sweet, simple little incidents about the birds and the flowers, coaxing him to eat or to drink. Daisy never entered his room but that it seemed brighter for her coming. He liked to hear her talk; her voice was very sweet and low; it soothed him. Then, when he grew a little better—when the pain in some degree lessened, and his mind grew clear—he wanted something to occupy it. He had grown resigned to his fate; the sweetness and brightness of life were all over to him, but duty remained. Not that he considered he had any peculiar line of duty marked out for him; but he had an estate that required management, he had tenantry that required looking after. Dear heaven! how different his fate would have been had Lady May been true to him—had she been less proud, less cruel—had they gone through life hand-in-hand. What would he not, in that case, have longed to achieve?—what would he not have done?—where would his ambition have stopped?—what heights could he not have climbed? It was all over, and life could give him nothing; he must endure it until it ended. Even then one of his sweetest hopes was ended. Those who loved each other always talked of meeting again in another world; he had no such hope; he could not say to himself that he would live his life lonely and well, hoping in another world to meet his lost love. He could not comfort himself as other people, by hoping to find in eternity what he had lost in time—it was all over for him. Then, when he could no longer endure those thoughts, he would call Daisy; and Daisy, in the charm of her sweet, pure girlhood, would hasten to him.

How many weary hours of pain she soothed and whiled away! How many lessons of gentleness and patience she preached to him,

without knowing it! How many dreary nights and dreary days she was like an angel of light by his bedside!

Then, when the worst of his illness was past, and he could take more interest in what was passing, he asked Daisy to read to him; and Daisy, with a puzzled look on her fair face, brought him the most curious collection ever beheld—not one of them, in his sense of the word, readable.

“Is there no library here—no means of getting books?” he asked in dismay; and Daisy told him, “no; people round there made books of the trees and fields,” she fancied, “for there seemed no other.”

“We will soon remedy that,” said Sir Clinton. “Will you write for me?”

The result of the said letters came in the shape of two boxes, one filled with the works of the best authors of the day, which he presented to Daisy; the other, a box from Mudie’s, with a well-selected assortment.

Daisy looked up in bewildered amaze.

“For me!” she said—“all these books for me! It can not be possible.” Her delight was unbounded. “But, Mr. Clifton,” she said, “it is such a valuable present, how can I take it from you?”

“You deserve more than I can ever give you, Daisy,” he replied, languidly. “Think what you have done for me.”

After that the dreary hours were all ended. Daisy was an insatiable reader; there were times when she spent whole nights in reading to him, when pain made him restless and sleepless. She never seemed to tire; her fair face would flush, her eyes grow bright, and she would not cease until her voice failed her, and she could read no more.

One morning—she had risen early—she had brought fresh, fragrant flowers into his room; she had made it the very picture of neatness, opened the window, and the perfumed morning air, musical with the song of birds, had rushed in. She had made some tea, and then sat down to read to him; he had not slept all night with the intensity of his pain. She read, in that soft, cooing voice of hers, some of Owen Meredith’s poems, and it seemed to him that he was listening to a strain of sweetest music.

Suddenly, the room was filled with a great flood of golden light—the sun had risen, and the window faced the east. Daisy raised her eyes, and in the glowing beauty of the heavens she forgot for one moment what she was reading. He looked at her sweet face.

“What are you thinking of, Daisy?” asked Sir Clinton.

She glanced at him with those pure, serene eyes, that had in them more of heaven than of earth.

“I was thinking,” she said, “how different my life has been since you came here. I knew little of these things, except by instinct.”

“You knew little of what, Daisy?” he asked, gently.

“Little of real beauty—I mean, that I did not know how it was put into words; I could feel it. I used to go out to watch the sun rise, to look at the dew on the grass, to listen to the birds. I liked to be near the great trees when the wind stirred them; I liked the sunset and the clouds; but I did not quite understand why—now you have made it all clear.”

"I, Daisy?" he said. "How have I made it clear?"

"By the books you have given me," she replied, "and by all the strange, beautiful things you have told me. I did not know—I hardly knew what poetry was, and I had no idea of such grand stories as I have been reading to you. It seems to me that I have been asleep—at least, that my mind had been asleep—until you came; and now it will never be the same again."

"Not even when I am gone, Daisy?"

He did not know why he asked her the question; he saw a shadow of pain come into her clear eyes.

"We will not talk about that," she said. "You can not go until you are well, and you are not well yet."

"I give you a great deal of trouble, Daisy; you will be pleased when I go,"

"Pleased!" she repeated; "oh, no, Mr. Clifton. When you go, it will be as though the sun had set."

"You would miss me, then, Daisy? Well, I may thank Heaven some one cares for me. I shall not be friendless while you live, Daisy."

She looked at him in sheer wonder.

"Friendless! You never can be that. You may not have wife or mother to love you, but you are not friendless; you are so good, so kind, so bonny, many must love you."

"I fear not, Daisy," he said, sadly; and she wondered at the pain in his voice.

Many must love him!—he who had so utterly failed in winning the one beautiful woman who was the whole world to him—the words seemed almost a mockery. Then Daisy resumed her reading; but Sir Clinton lay lost in thought.

When he was able to walk slowly from one room to another, the spring was coming; then it became one of his greatest pleasures to go into the garden, where every sweet flower that the poets had loved seemed to grow. With Daisy's help he could reach the garden chair; and there he would sit watching the crocuses, golden, blue, and white;—watching the snow-drops, the purple violets, sweet spring flowers of every hue; looking so sad, so heart-broken, that Mrs. Erne, touched with compassion, would say:

"Daisy, go to the poor gentleman, and try to cheer him."

No thought of danger for her daughter ever came across the simple woman's mind. He was a gentleman; her child a daughter of the people; there lay between them the great bridge of birth, and even, in the mother's fancy, that was never crossed.

Then Daisy would go to him, sit down by his side, soothe him, talk to him of the flowers, of the sweet springtide, of anything that came first into her mind.

Sir Clinton had known many ladies, women of birth and culture, polished, elegant, accomplished; he had always taken pleasure in the conversation of refined and well bred women; but this was something new to him. Daisy sometimes made mistakes in grammar; there was a slight trace of provincialism in her accent, but her thoughts were pure and beautiful as the written words of poets.

It was the first time that the clear, pure mind of a young girl had been unfolded to him; her reverence, her purity of thought and

word, her simplicity, the innate beauty of her ideas—all filled him with admiration. So, watching the changing skies, the flowers, the green, springing leaves, they sat, talking in a dreamy, half mystical strain of a hundred things, forgetting the bridge between them; but Sir Clinton never for one moment forgot Lady May, and life was never the same again for Daisy Erne.

CHAPTER XV.

SIR CLINTON'S RESOLVE.

ONE fine spring day Sir Clinton felt better; the sun shone warmly; the snow and the cold of winter were passed and gone; the birds were beginning to build their nests; the leaves were springing fresh and green; all nature was brightening under the influence of the change. Sir Clinton felt better; for the first time, that morning he had walked a few steps alone; the doctor had told him that in a few weeks he would be able to travel—to go where he liked. Even with the crushing weight of his sorrow on him, the sweet spring day did its work—he was better.

It seemed so long since he had heard any news of the outer world; no one knew where he was; he had not sent his address to any one; he had preferred bearing the shock of his illness and the shock of his grief alone. He did wonder at times what had happened in that outer world, wherein he had once played so prominent a part; he felt some little desire to know what was going on; it seemed to him almost as though he had been dead. He did not know what ministers were in or out; he had not heard any news of any kind, whether there was peace or war, prosperity or adversity, and some human interest awoke in his heart at last.

Mrs. Erne was going to send to the country town for things that were needed, and he asked her to get some papers, writing down the names. If Mrs. Erne had been less simple, she must have known from the names of those papers that Sir Clinton belonged to the exclusive class of society.

They came: it was evening then, and Daisy had trimmed the lamps in the little parlor.

"Shall I read them to you, Mr. Clifton?" she asked, "or will you read yourself?"

He thanked her, but preferred reading to himself, and Daisy left him alone. He opened the papers with a zest that was new to him.

"Poor old world!" he thought to himself; "nothing gives one such a good idea of it as being out of it for a time."

There it was, "Political Intelligence," a leading article on Russia, letters on different matters of public interest, news in high life. Sir Clinton breathed a deep sigh of relief as he read; after all, it was something to belong to this wicked, weary, brilliant world. Suddenly his attention was caught by a paragraph in one corner—"Approaching Marriage in High Life." It said very briefly, but long enough for him, that a marriage was rumored as being about to take place between the beautiful, accomplished Lady May Trevlyn and the Duke of Rosecarn.

He had been lying for many months on a sick-bed; he had been almost at the gates of death from weakness and pain; he had lived apart from all who knew him that he might forget her; he had sworn to himself, over and over again, that his love was dead—slain by her coldness and her cruelty, her shameful pride; he had believed that he was dead to all emotion; yet, as he read this, his love so long repressed, his anger so long kept down, rose in a hot, passionate torrent, sweeping everything before him. He was like one bereft of his reason; that mighty love he believed dead had surged again through heart and soul, had filled his whole being, had woke every pulse to the burning sting of passion. It had mastered him again. Standing there, with his right hand raised to curse her, he could have kissed the ground at her feet. He had never loved her more madly, more wildly, than now, when he knew that she was going to marry another. He loved, yet hated her; he cursed, yet blessed her; he was mad with anger, yet mad with love. He was to be pitied if ever man was. At one moment he thought it was easier to slay her than to know she was really another man's wife. Then he laughed himself to scorn. Why should he care?—he had given her up of his own free will. What could it matter to him?—she was false as Judas. He believed that she had always intended to marry the duke; she had only used him as a kind of dupe, she had only trifled with him, broken his heart, driven him mad for pastime; she had marred his life for her own amusement. Then would come a swift, sudden revulsion. Perhaps he had been to blame; he had been jealous, hasty. She was so lovely, so graceful, it was no wonder that men admired her. He was torn with different emotions—love, jealousy, anger swayed him alternately. Then he said to himself how foolish he was, that the past was buried; all his emotion was wasted, his love was dead. Lady May was less to him than any other woman, and why grieve over her? The memory of her, as he had seen her last, under the light of the lamps, her white hands raised to repulse him, her beautiful face all glowing with pride and scorn, the light of her eyes, the gleam of her jewels, the sheen of her golden hair, all dazzling him—how imperially fair, how royally beautiful; but how proud, how cold to him!

Should he live, and see her make that hated rival happy in her love? Should he live to see her another man's wife—she whom he loved with so loyal a love? A fierce and hot impulse came over him, the impulse that leads men to murder. In that supreme moment of anguish and despair, it would have fared ill with the Duke of Rosecarn had he been near.

“It had all been planned,” he said to himself, “to win her from him—the plays, the charades, they had all been arranged for that one purpose. Of course, it was only natural a great heiress should marry a duke.”

Then came the reaction, always so terrible to bear. He had lost her, for all time and all eternity—she was lost to him!

Lost to him! Never again, while the sun shone or the sea rolled—never, while the blue heavens stretched out above him, would she, the woman he loved so dearly, be anything to him again! He had looked in her face, held her hand, for the last time. Lost to him! And as the words went home to him, with a mighty pang such as

he had never known before, a terrible cry came from his lips, and he sunk, almost fainting, in his chair.

Daisy heard it, and hastened to him. He was lying back in his chair, his face was white as death, great drops on his brow; his hands had fallen by his side. Daisy ran to him, with a little cry; she thought it was some terrible physical pain—perhaps that he had injured his ankle—that he had hurt himself. He had always been an object of solicitude to her; she had tended him as, years ago, she tended the wounded birds she found in the woods. She knelt down by his side.

“What is the matter, dear?” asked Daisy. “I heard you cry out. You have hurt your ankle—you have done something to hurt yourself. What is it?”

The pure, sweet face bending over him, the tender eyes raining down deepest pity and compassion on him, the kindly voice soothing as though he were a grieving child—all touched him as he had never been touched before. He laid his head on Daisy’s shoulder, and wept passionate, bitter tears—tears that did not shame his manhood.

A new, strange dignity seemed to fall over Daisy. It was a man weeping those bitter tears, weeping with deep-drawn, passionate sobs, that shook his whole frame. She knew all words were useless, but she knelt by him in mute, sweet sympathy, until the passion of his grief abated. She saw then that it was not physical pain, as she had believed at first—men do not cry for that; the cause of his tears was anger, harder to bear.

She showed her sympathy by kneeling there in silence, waiting for him to speak; then, at last, he raised his head.

“Daisy,” he said, gently, “I am ashamed of myself. I had a great trouble once, you know, when you found me, and that trouble came home to me to-night. It forced me to shed the first tears I have shed since it happened.”

She made no reply, save by stroking his hand, wondering much in her own mind what had brought his sorrow so forcibly before him to-night.

Hours after he had left the little parlor, Daisy sat pondering on what it could be. She wondered if anything in the newspaper had disturbed him—he might have seen there the death of some dear friend. Daisy took the paper and read it through. Surely nothing there could apply to him. She read the “Approaching Marriage in High Life,” but innocent Daisy never dreamed “the lovely and accomplished Lady May” had anything to do with their guest. Then she dismissed it from her thoughts. Men had many sources of sorrow; if he did not like to tell her his, he had, doubtless, some good reason for it. Daisy never forgot that scene; it made her kinder than ever to him; she watched his face as a child watches its mother; if she saw it darkening with thought or growing pale, she left all other occupations to read to him. She fancied, too, that there was a change in him; he had grown more thoughtful; he rarely smiled, even when she was reading his favorite authors. There were times when he never heard one word; times when she asked him questions, and he never answered them; times when he looked so utterly wretched that Daisy’s heart ached for him.

His trouble seemed to have grown harder to him since he read that notice of her marriage. In his desperation a strange idea was gradually unfolding itself before him; he would never resume his place in the world; he would live out the remainder of his life in this little cottage, or in some other like it; he would forswear friendship, love, ease, wealth, luxury; he would live a hermit's life, content with his books. That morbid idea seemed to relieve him, dwelling on it eased his pain. Perhaps when she found she had driven him from the living world of men, she would repent of her falsity and repent of her pride.

Men disappointed in love make strange resolves; this one pleased Sir Clinton—he would keep himself right away from the great world. It should never be in the power of the Duchess of Rosecarn to show her grandeur before him. She should never show her power over him by smiling in proud, serene indifference while she held out her hand to him; he would not pain himself by looking at her again. So, lest he should meet her, lest he should meet those who would pity him, triumph over him, he would keep away from the great world. He would let his money accumulate, and found some charity with it. He would only take what was sufficient for him to live upon.

It, after a short time, he found that life at the cottage did not satisfy him, then he would go abroad—not to those places that English travelers most affected, but in some part of France where English feet seldom trod; or, if he chose, he could go to America—the New World—and forget all that had happened to him here in the old.

Having once formed this idea, he dwelt on it with brooding, silent satisfaction—it solaced him; it seemed to him that, in thus punishing himself, he was in some measure avenging himself on the world in general.

They asked him one day, when sending to the county town, if he would like to have some newspapers. He said no with such passionate vehemence that Mrs. Erne looked at him in wonder.

No more news for him; he had read enough; he had finished with the false, wicked, brilliant world; he had no wish to read the glories of that marriage—the marriage of the woman he loved with the rival he hated!

CHAPTER XVI.

“TO WAIT UPON YOU.”

THEY were sitting under the apple-blossoms; the southern wind had stirred them, and they were falling all around; some of them, pink and white, lay on Daisy's dress; she held them in her hand. She was looking up with laughing eyes into Sir Clinton's face.

“Tell you the history of my life, Mr. Clifton?” she said. “Why, there is no history in it.”

“Every one has a story,” said Sir Clinton.

“I have none,” replied Daisy; “my biography could be written in very few words.”

“Have you ever lived in any other place but this?” he asked.

"No; my father was head keeper in the woods here when he married my mother. She lived in the county town close by—Woodburn. He brought her home here, and she has never left the house since."

"Then you have not seen much of the world, Daisy?"

"No; but I have not missed it—I have been very happy without it."

"I have read of a man without a shadow," said Sir Clinton; "now I know a girl without a story."

"I may have a story some day," said Daisy, laughingly. "If ever I do, I will tell it to you. Was there ever a man without a shadow, Mr. Clifton?"

"I can not say. Daisy, I should like to change places with you just for once; I should like to have lived as you have done—in the world, but not of it. So you were born here?"

"Yes; I was born and have lived here; I suppose that I shall die here. I see no prospect of any change. My father died when I was quite a little girl. He had been such a faithful servant to the owner of this estate, Sir Henry Woodley, that he gave my mother a pension, and told her she might live here for the remainder of her life. I went to Woodburn, to a young ladies' school, for four years, but I do not think," continued Daisy, with charming candor, "that I have learned very much. That is all my story."

"It is sweet and simple as a pastoral story, Daisy. How old are you?"

"Oh," replied Daisy, with conscious pride, "I am older than I look; I am nearly nineteen."

"And you have no companions—no friends?" he continued.

"None that I care for," she replied. "I knew some girls at Woodburn; but their fathers kept shops," said innocent Daisy, "and they considered themselves very much above me."

Which view of social position amused Sir Clinton so that he laughed a hearty, genuine laugh—the first she had ever heard from his lips. Daisy looked at him with a grave reproach in her tender eyes.

"How cruel of you to laugh, Mr. Clifton! I assure you it was a trouble to me."

"So the shopkeepers' daughters would not associate with you?" he said, looking down at the lovely face and graceful figure with a strange smile.

"No," replied Daisy, frankly; "and I, in my turn, did not care to know the girls in a class below my own—that is, if woodkeepers' daughters have a class—have they, Mr. Clifton?"

She spoke so seriously Sir Clinton laughed again.

"A very charming class," he said; "and, Daisy, as you know so few, tell me, has any one ever told you you were very pretty?"

"No," she replied, with a pleased, bright blush; "no one ever told me that."

"But," he persisted, "do you know it?"

"Well," said Daisy, "I have thought sometimes that my face was pleasant—nice to look at; but I did not know that it was really what people call pretty."

"It is very pretty, Daisy. If you were in what people call the world, you would find that it was thought a great deal of."

"I do not think I should care much about that," replied Daisy; "but, all the same, I am glad that I am pretty. Do you like people that are pretty, Mr. Clifton?"

"Without doubt I did like them once upon a time," he replied.

"And why not now?" asked Daisy, with a look of great disappointment—so great that he could not help seeing it.

"Why do children tire of sweets? Why do all men tire, in time, of everything?"

"Do men tire of everything?" asked Daisy, solemnly; "even of their own sisters and their mothers?"

"I never had a sister, and my mother died so long ago I can not answer the question; but I know they tire of everything else."

"That is a great pity," said Daisy; "girls are not like that. I should never tire of my mother, my home, or you."

"You are different to most girls, Daisy—at least to the girls I have known."

She looked up at him with eager eyes.

"I have often thought," she said, "that I should like to ask you if you ever liked any one very much. My mother said one day that you gave her the impression of a man who had loved some one very dearly who died."

"Did your mother say that, Daisy? She is right. I did love some one once, with all my heart and soul—better than my life and all that it held—some one who died."

Daisy listened reverently. This, then, was the sorrow which had driven him mad, which made him always sad and thoughtful. Ah, well, for such a sorrow as this there was no cure.

"And did the one whom you loved so much love you, Mr. Clifton?"

"We will not talk about it now," he replied. "What are you going to do with all the rest of your life, Daisy?"

She laughed—a happy little laugh of perfect content.

"I shall wait upon you," she replied; "I shall read to you, and watch your face to see when you grow sad; I shall get all you want, and always have everything ready for you."

"But, Daisy, I shall not always be an invalid," he said.

The perfect content of her face changed ever so little.

"No, you will not always be an invalid; but you will always want some one to wait on you," said Daisy.

Sir Clinton looked earnestly at her.

"I know all your wants now," she said, "and I understand your tastes so well; no one could ever wait on you so well as I can."

"I know that, Daisy," he said; "but you see there is a great difference between us. A strong man like me does not need waiting on; and then, even if I did require it, it would not be from such delicate, gentle hands as yours."

Daisy began to look alarmed.

"I—I thought you would always like me to wait on you," she said.

"My dear Daisy, you are very simple and very sweet; you do not

understand, I can see; the ways of the world are all new to you; there is a certain thing called etiquette—you know nothing of that."

"No," replied Daisy, undauntedly; "I do not."

"And etiquette will prevent you from waiting on me, when I get strong and well," he said; "although it does not prevent it now."

"Then etiquette is very cruel," said Daisy; "and I do not like it."

"Few people do. *That* can not be the end of the story, Daisy; we must find a different termination. Now, for instance, if some benevolent fairy gave you a nice fortune, and one of the young farmers round here asked you to marry him, would not that do?"

"No; I should not like that at all. I should not like to be married, Mr. Clifton."

"Then what would you like to do?" he asked.

"To wait upon you," she replied; and he smiled again more gravely this time.

"We are arguing in a circle," he said; "that can not be."

"I shall think of something else, then," said Daisy; "but whatever it is must be for you. Now you have been out long enough, and my mother has some famous soup; you must come in and have it."

"We will finish our argument another time, then, Daisy; you shall think it over and find out what you would like best. Imagine that some fairy is coming to ask you what you like best—what you would prefer out of all the world—then tell me, as though I were a fairy."

She had been so good to him, so kind to him, that he had pleased himself by thinking he would give her, not a large fortune, but a sufficient one to make her a desirable wife for any of the young farmers of the neighborhood. But, almost to his wonder, Daisy looked up at him again, and said:

"I know well enough what I should prefer from all the world—it would be to wait upon you."

This time Sir Clinton did not smile. There was to him something almost painful in this devoted attachment to himself. He never dreamed that it was anything more than a girlish liking, such as she must naturally feel for anything she had tended, cared for, and nursed as she had done him. Yet he felt sorry, too, that she liked him so well. In the scheme of life which he had laid down for himself no woman bore any part; he would have none of them. He said to himself that he had learned his bitter lesson, learned it well, and was not to suffer again. Of course it was only a pretty, romantic, idyllic kind of idea that Daisy had of always waiting on him, but it disturbed him a little—he wished it had not been so; and when Daisy, an hour afterward, came as usual to offer her services with book and pen, he looked gravely abstracted. He wanted peace, and he said to himself, cynically, that where there was the love or liking of any woman there was no peace.

The next scene in the tragedy was that he grew tired of the dull, quiet monotony of the cottage. At first it had been like paradise—a peaceful refuge from trouble, a haven of rest and peace. He had been content to watch the sky, to listen to the birds, to note the

growth of the flowers, to make nature his book, and to read it with attention. That was when his strength failed him, and he felt ill, weak, spiritless. Now he was able to walk—the pure country air invigorated him; he was able to walk without pain, the strength of his manhood was returning to him, and he could not rest much longer.

He had no desire to go back into the world—the great cruel world of fashion—but he wanted change; he would go abroad and seek it there. He would fain have traveled through deserts where human faces and human voices would never pursue him. He had no longing for his kind, no wish for society; but the desires of life, its vague wishes, dreams, and hopes, were all awakening within him. The time had come when he could no longer content himself at Woodside.

He made many pleasing pictures to himself how he would make Mrs. Erne happy for life; he would settle an annuity on her that should place her above all want; and to Daisy—gentle, graceful Daisy—he would give a fortune; then, in the years to come, if ever he should return from his travels, he would come to visit them. A pleasant picture, but it was never to be realized.

CHAPTER XVII.

SAD NEWS FOR DAISY.

DAISY ERNE had never known what life meant until now. The course of a peaceful brook in the depths of a shady nook had not been more calm or more serene. As she told Sir Clinton, she had no story. She had been born in that simple cottage at Woodside; her happy, innocent childhood had been spent in the woods; her friends and playmates were the flowers and birds; she had known no others. Her father had been kind and indulgent. While he lived, Daisy made little expeditions to different woods and forests. He taught her all his little lore—the names of the trees, the different habits of different birds, the names and the nature of flowers. He taught her, after his own fashion, to read the changing face of the skies; she knew where the birds built; she knew what flowers came out at the different seasons. Then, when he died, even those little pleasures ceased, and Daisy grew up pure as an angel by her mother's side. Nothing could be more simple than that life. Mrs. Erne had the pension Sir Henry Woodley allowed her. She increased her income by the washing of lace, in which Daisy also excelled; they had a garden and an orchard, the proceeds of which were sold at Woodburn. They worked hard and paid their way, which Mrs. Erne thought the grandest thing in life. In summer they rose with the sun and worked until it set. Then, when Daisy was ten, her mother sent her to what she proudly called “a lady's school,” where she went for four years. There she learned all there was to be taught, but she made no friends. She came home contented enough, willing to believe with her mother that she knew all that was needful.

The pretty, quiet home life began then. Daisy made her own

world at home. She grew up beautiful, pure, and good; innocent as a child; utterly ignorant of the world and its ways; reverent, pious, and simple. Into this dull gray life the coming of Sir Clinton had been like a flash of glorious sunlight—how many worlds did he open to her? He taught her poetry and romance; he changed the whole face of the world for her. She saw the meaning of a thousand things she had never known before; she saw new beauty everywhere; she had no idea that she loved him with the love that was her doom. She only knew that there was no life away from him; that all the light and glory of the world was centered in him. He was so handsome, so unlike every one she had seen, no wonder Daisy loved him. She did so, after a fashion, the first moment she saw him. She called him bonny, and talked of him in her child-like fashion. It had ended in a love that was pitiful in its intensity.

If he had spent the remainder of his life there, all would have been well. Daisy would have been quite content to wait upon him; she desired nothing more. It was the mention of his going that changed, as it were, the worshiping attention of the child into the passionate love of the woman. For Sir Clinton's mind was made up at last. He was well, strong enough to go, and go he must. He had formed his plans. He would go to France—to the southern coast—and live in the land of the olives and the vine. He would go to Paris first, as he wanted a large sum of money, and his bankers could so easily send it there. Then he would choose his future residence in some almost unknown place.

When he quite decided he never forgot the day; it was in the middle of June, a warm, sunny, fragrant day, when the birds were singing, and the roses in bloom. Mrs. Erne was busied in the garden gathering strawberries for him to eat with the rich, sweet cream. Daisy sat in the pretty little porch, gathering together the falling leaves of the red roses to make a *pot-pourri* after the true country fashion. Sir Clinton saw her there, and went to her in the preoccupation of his thoughts. During the last few days he had quite forgotten Daisy's declaration of wanting always to wait upon him. He was attached to her in a grateful, kindly fashion; he thought her one of the purest, loveliest, sweetest girls he had ever met, far above her station; he had the kindest intentions toward her; he meant to dower her, to be her friend for life. As for flirting with her, he had never even dreamed of such a thing; he had never spoken to her or looked at her in a way that he would not have done to a sister of his own. He looked upon her as a kind, good girl, who had amused him through a long, tiresome sickness. He had no thought of her which he would not have told to the whole world, and he no more dreamed of Daisy's deep love than did her own mother.

He went to her, thinking how fair and graceful she looked, her pure, sweet face bending over the roses. He took up some of the leaves in his fingers.

"What are you doing this for, Daisy?" he asked.

"For you," she replied, quickly.

"For me? What am I to do with all these rose-leaves?"

She laughed, and Sir Clinton always liked Daisy's laugh, it was so clear, so silvery, so sweet.

"You know the two pink vases in your room that have lids to them; I shall fill them with rose-leaves, and they will make a pleasant perfume for you all the year."

"But, Daisy," he said, quietly, "I shall not be here all the year. I have been idle long enough; I must work."

"You can work here," she said, quickly.

He shook his head gravely.

"This is merely lotus-eating, Daisy; there is nothing here for me to do."

"Why need you work?" asked Daisy. "You are very happy as you are."

"Why did God give me brains but to use them? If any one had prophesied to me two years ago that I could live as I have lived for the last ten months, I could not have believed it."

He saw the laughter die from her face, the light from her eyes. She laid the roses down on the seat beside her.

"You do not mean, Mr. Clinton, that you are really going away?"

He did not understand the expression of her face; it was as one who waits a sentence of life or death.

"I must go, Daisy," he said. "I shall ask you to spend to-morrow in helping me arrange my books and papers."

She stood up then, the rose-leaves falling all round her.

"You are going," she said, "and you wish me to help you. I can not, I can not; I could sooner die!"

"Why, Daisy?" he asked, wonderingly.

"Because I—I never thought you would go. I do not know what to do—life is not the same as it was. You must not go, Mr. Clinton."

He thought it the child-like sorrow of a child for one who had been kind to her.

"I know you will miss me, Daisy," he said; "I shall miss you very much, but I shall see you again."

Love for the proud lady who had slighted him blinded him to all signs of love in another woman's face. He saw that she grew very pale, and her lips sprung apart with a long, quivering sigh.

"I shall see you again, Daisy," he said. "I am going abroad, and shall be absent many years. When I return, you will be one of the first I shall come to see."

No word or sound came from the white, parted lips.

"I shall hope to find you very happy, Daisy," he said. "You will be married then, without doubt; but you will always find room for me by the fire-side, will you not?"

There was something tragic in the look she turned upon him.

"I shall not be happy; I shall not marry—I do not want to marry; but if you go, I shall die."

And, without another word, Daisy left the porch, Sir Clinton looking after her with wonder in his face.

"Poor child! poor Daisy! she will be sure to miss me, I have been here so long."

He did not know that Daisy went to her room, and had fallen there, white and senseless, on the floor.

CHAPTER XVIII

"NO KING SO GRAND AS HE."

HE dreamed so little of the truth, that, before he saw her again, he had forgotten all that had passed. He did not remember what she said; the only impression left upon his mind was that he had told Daisy he was going, and she was to help him in his packing. He saw her again, some hours afterward; she was standing in the kitchen then, busy with some ripe red fruit, and as he went to speak to her, he started back in wonder and amaze. Was this Daisy? The girl looked up at him with a white, wan face, devoid of all light and all color, with large, shadowed eyes, full of pain, with quivering lips that would not be still. What had happened to her? Sir Clinton felt quite concerned.

"Daisy, are you ill?" he asked.

"Yes, I am ill," she replied, quitting the kitchen as she spoke. Mrs. Erne turned to Sir Clinton.

"I can not think what has come over her, Mr. Clifton," she said. "I am frightened to look at her. I did hear that the fever was very bad at Woodburn; surely it can not be that Daisy is taking it; she looks awfully ill."

"You must nurse her up; I will send some good port wine for her. Poor Daisy, how well she nursed me!"

Mrs. Erne thanked him with her old-fashioned courtesy, so little did they understand the kind of fever that was burning the girl's heart away.

Sir Clinton was to know, though. He went to Woodburn, having several matters to arrange. He had not settled any time for returning, and, having many little commissions to execute, the twilight had faded into night before he returned.

There was never any fear of robbers at Woodside—the cottage door was closed, not locked; he opened it gently, lest Daisy should be asleep and he should disturb her. The sound of violent, passionate weeping struck him with wonder; it came from his own room, too, and the door that led to it was half open. He had no thought of listening, but he drew near silently, and he never forgot the picture.

Daisy sat by the window, her head laid on the window-sill, in the very abandonment of sorrow; her rich brown hair, all unfastened, lay like a veil around her. She was weeping with such violent, passionate sobs, it seemed as though each one would rend the delicate frame. Mrs. Erne stood by her.

"Come, Daisy," she was saying, "we must not stay here. This room is ready for Mr. Clifton now; he may return at any moment—we must not stay here."

Daisy only answered with her sobs; then he saw her fling her arms up with a great cry.

"Oh, mother, mother!" she said; "I shall die if he goes. What am I to do? I can not bear it!"

"He must go some time, child; as well now as another," was the calm reply.

"I shall die," moaned Daisy. "Oh, mother, my life will never be the same!"

"I shall begin to wish he had never come, if you grieve in this way, Daisy; though he has been a kind friend to us."

"His kindness has killed me," said Daisy, "for I can never live when he has gone away." She sat silent for some minutes; then, with a laugh far more pitiful than her tears, she said: "Mother, do you remember the song you used to sing, and I thought it so foolish? It begins:

"Oh, mother, mother, make my bed,
And spread the milk-white sheets."

It was not so foolish, after all. I could say just the same words now. I feel as though there was nothing left for me but to lay me down and die."

"But that girl in the song was mourning for her lover," said simple Mrs. Erne, "and Mr. Clifton is no lover of yours."

"No," said Daisy; "but, all the same, I love him, mother. I love him with all my heart. I love him so dearly that, when he has gone away, I shall turn my face to the wall and die."

"But, Daisy, my dear, that is not right, you know."

"Right or wrong, I can not help it, mother. My heart has gone out of me, and gone to him. My heart, my soul, my mind, all love him; and, when he is gone, I shall die."

Mrs. Erne was horror-stricken.

"Why, Daisy," she cried, "that is lover's love; and a modest girl should never be the first to speak of it. Has Mr. Clifton ever talked to you about love?"

"No, never. I do not know what lover's love is. I only know that my life seems to have grown into his life; but he will never know it. He will go away, and never know that I broke my heart for love of him. Oh, mother, mother! you are a woman grown, and I am a child—tell me how to bear it."

But simple Mrs. Erne was paralyzed with fear. 'This passionate outburst from her quiet, simple, playful Daisy alarmed her.

"He is so handsome, so bonny, so kind. I never saw a king; but no king could be so royal, so grand as he is. How am I to live, to look at these rooms that will be haunted by his face? I can not. Before he has been gone one week, mother, I shall be in my grave."

"Daisy, it is too dreadful; you must not say such things. Why, child, I never even talked to your father in that fashion."

"Perhaps you did not love him so much. See, mother, if I could, I would be like the girl in the poem; I would disguise myself as a page, and go all over the world with him, waiting on him, content never to be known, if I might only look at his face and listen to his voice. I have never thought of any life without him."

"I am sure, Daisy, that if I had dreamed of this, the poor gentleman should never have entered these doors. But, whatever you do, child, you must not let him know it—you must not see him again."

And Daisy sobbed again.

"There is no one like him in the wide world, mother, and he is

going away—going abroad. He says he shall come to see us when he returns; but he will never see me.”

“Why, Daisy, if he were your lover, you could not take it more to heart.”

“I do not want a lover; but, oh, if he would let me go with him, to wait on him, to be near him—I would sooner that than be crowned a queen!”

“Bless the child!” cried Mrs. Erne, quite aghast; and then she did not know what else to say—this kind of thing was beyond her. “It is a most unfortunate thing, Daisy. I ought to have known better, perhaps, than to have left a young girl like you so much with any gentleman; but I never thought you would be so foolish.”

“Why am I foolish? Who could help it? I am not foolish; I am wise. It is true wisdom to love what is highest and best. Oh, mother, do not scold me—do not say one cross word! I shall not be the first one who has died for love.”

Then again she wept, so bitterly; and he saw the moon shining on her fair hair and white neck.

“Come, Daisy,” said Mrs. Erne, weeping for sympathy; “you must not stay here. Mr. Clifton will soon be back now; come to your own room.”

Then, suddenly waking to a sense of what was passing around him, Sir Clinton turned away. He would not for the whole world that they should find him there. He went away silently as he had entered, and stood out in the garden under the stars alone—alone, with a dazed, bewildered confusion in his breast. Daisy—sweet, gentle Daisy—was going to die for him! She loved him so well that she only cared to die when he should be gone.

He stood bewildered at first by the shock, hardly able to believe it. Why, he had never looked on the girl with a lover’s eye at all—such a thing had been furthest from his thoughts; and she had grown so devoted to him. “At least,” he thought to himself, “that is a sincere love; it is neither for my rank nor my title—she knows nothing of them—it is for myself that she loves me.”

Was there a man living who would not be proud of such a thing—to be loved for himself? Who would not be touched by it, the pure, deep, sweet love of a young girl’s heart? He was touched; he remembered his own grief and pain, his own torture and despair—how he had suffered because he loved even to madness one who did not love him; and now Daisy, sweet Daisy, with her lovely, dimpled face and pure, tender heart, had the same to endure. He could not bear to think of it. Daisy had been so good to him, so kind to him; through dreary days and nights she had nursed him with such unwearied devotion. So she had learned to love him; her heart had gone out to him, in her words. Who was he that this pure, guileless girl should give him the wealth of her love? His eyes grew dim with tears—he, who had been duped, deceived, driven mad by the light falsehood of a woman.

What difference between them—this daughter of the people, so fair and gentle, and the daughter of a dozen earls! The one loved him so dearly that she declared she must die when the light of his presence was withdrawn; the other had toyed with him while it suited her purpose, then had driven him away in despair. If Lady

May had for him but a tithe of the love that Daisy had, then indeed would his life have been blessed to him.

He must go—it was very sad, very pitiful, but, all the same, he must go. Then he tried to picture to himself how he should feel if, far away in sunny France, he heard the news of Daisy's death—Daisy dead for love of him! Why did love always go by the rule of contrary? He had loved Lady May—she had no love to give him; now Daisy loved him, and what had he to give her?

Then—he could not tell how or why—an idea came to him; perhaps the stars or the night wind inspired him, perhaps the sound of Daisy's sobbing touched him; one thing was quite clear, the idea came—*why not marry Daisy?* His life, so far as all its prospects were concerned, had ended; Lady May was, by this time, another man's wife. In the wide world no one cared for him except Daisy; could he let Daisy die because she loved him? Marriage would bring him no happiness; he did not look for it, did not want it; but it would save Daisy's life.

He could tell her frankly he had no love to give her, that his heart was dead; but if it would make her happy to spend her life with him, it should be so.

Then again he recoiled from it; his whole heart and love had been Lady May's; could he call another woman wife?—could he bear to say kind words, to hold a woman's hand in his? No. He revolted from the idea. He had never loved any woman except Lady May, and she alone could be his wife.

So Daisy, with her foolish, wild, impulsive love, must die. Poor child! he could see her in the moonlight, sobbing her heart out for him. The only woman he had ever loved gave him up to be a duchess. The only woman who had ever loved him died of her love!

The contrast struck him; it must not be; better that he should suffer than Daisy die. She was not what the world would call a fitting wife for him; she had neither money, title, connection, or any single advantage, except that she loved him—loved him with all her simple, tender, innocent life.

Oh, no; Daisy must not die. She should spend the remainder of her life with him, and, whatever happiness his kindness could give her, she should have. He would make no pretense of loving her; he would frankly tell her that; but she should be his wife, if that would make her happy.

He opened the door as though he had just returned, and Mrs. Erne came quickly into the room. He looked up at her with a smile.

"I have altered my mind," he said; "I do not think that I shall go to-morrow, after all."

CHAPTER XIX.

SEALED HER FATE.

THE die was cast. He would marry Daisy—pretty, simple, tender Daisy should not die for love of him. He ought to have felt at rest when he had come to that decision; but he did not sleep well that night. He dreamed of Lady May; and, in his dreams, she took

Daisy's place. It was Lady May he was going to marry; and, when the rapture of his happiness woke him, the cold, stern reality was like a sharp wound.

"I shall never be happy," he thought to himself. "All idea of happiness is at an end; but I could make Daisy happy."

He decided. In the morning he would speak to her—he would tell her what he had decided, and ask her to be his wife. He saw her in the morning—the wan, white face and darkened eyes struck him.

"Daisy," he asked, "did not your mother tell you I had changed my mind—I am not going to-day?"

She raised her heavy eyes to his.

"If it is not to-day, it will be to-morrow or the day after—or the day will soon come when you will go."

"I have something to ask you first," he said. "Will you come out into the garden with me, Daisy?—I want to tell you something."

"Can you not tell me here, Mr. Clifton? It is about your parting, I suppose?"

"Not exactly, and I can not talk to you here. You always look to me more at home among the flowers and trees than in these rooms. See how the sun is shining—how the birds are singing! Come, Daisy, and hear what I have to say."

She walked by his side slowly enough. As a rule, Daisy danced rather than walked; but now her step was slow and languid. He went to the seat under the trees where she had sat so many hours with him. He placed her there, and stood by her side; then his heart misgave him—his whole soul shrunk from the task. It was Lady May whom he loved—the woman who had deceived and scorned him. As he stood in the sunshine, the memory of the hour in which he had asked Lady May to be his wife came over him. He saw again the beautiful, proud face softening in tenderness for him—the proud, sweet lips smiling for him; he heard the whispered words in which she answered she loved him. How could he ask this girl to take her place? He stared in silence, the words he had intended to speak dying on his lips. Suddenly Daisy looked up at him, a world of reproach in the dark, sorrowful eyes.

"Why did you ask me to come here, Mr. Clifton? You did not really want to speak to me."

She rose, as though to return. Daisy was not herself—the gentle grace of her movements seemed to have left her; she was abrupt, almost brusque, if that could be possible to Daisy. She turned away, but he laid his hand on her arm, and gently detained her.

"Daisy," he said, "you seem to be angry with me. What is it—have I offended you? Have I done anything that displeased you?"

"No," she replied, in a low voice. "I am not angry or displeased."

"Then what are you, Daisy? We are such old friends, you need not be afraid to tell me the truth."

"I am sorry you are going," said Daisy, with a deep blush. "You have been so kind to me, and it has all been so pleasant; and I—I do not see how it can ever be the same when you are gone."

Then Daisy stopped abruptly, with a suspicion of tears in her voice.

"I want to remedy all that," he said. "Will you go with me, Daisy?"

Never until the day he died did he forget the sudden light that transfigured her face—it absolutely dazzled him.

"I!" she repeated. "Oh, Mr. Clifton, do you really mean it?"

"If you will consent, Daisy. You have not yet heard all that I have to ask. Will you go with me as my wife—will you marry me?"

Her face fell then, and she looked at him most pitifully.

"Your wife? I—I do not want to be married, Mr. Clifton," she said, slowly.

"And why not, Daisy?" he asked.

"I do not think marriage is ever very happy; every one I know who is married is unhappy."

"Surely not. Your father and mother were happy?"

"Yes," she answered, with unconscious logic; "but then they loved each other."

He was about to say, "And so I love you;" but he paused abruptly; not in truth or in honor could he say that.

"Do you really believe that all people that marry are unhappy, Daisy? Dear child, what a terrible mistake! Why, a married life is supposed to be the happiest in the world; what makes you think differently?"

"Men beat their wives," said Daisy, gravely.

"Not in our class—at least, I mean, not respectable men. You might as well say all millers were blind because you happened to see one blind miller, as that all men beat their wives because one or two bad ones do so. What a strange idea! And is that the reason why you do not care to be married?"

"No, not quite; but I do not care about it, Mr. Clifton. I should like to wait on you, always to be near you; but I have never thought of being married."

"You could not go away with me, Daisy, unless you went as my wife."

"Could I not?" she asked, slowly.

"No. Without a doubt you have formed to yourself some idyllic idea of life—that you could go away with me, go wherever I went, wait upon me, and take care of me, as you have done here. Is it not so?"

"That is what I should have liked," she said.

"And that, Daisy, is what can never be. Etiquette and the proprieties of life forbid it. You could not leave with me and stay with me, unless it were as my wife."

Daisy looked up shyly at him.

"Would you really like me to be your wife?" she said. "You know I am not very clever, and you are far above me."

"Why do you say that I am so far above you, Daisy?"

"Because you are a gentleman, and I am a gamekeeper's daughter. My mother said there could be no comparison between your position and ours."

"Would you take me to be very rich, then, Daisy?"

She looked up at him with sweet, earnest gravity.

"Not so *very* rich," she replied; "but you have money, and we have none."

"You would not take me to be an English nobleman, then, Daisy?" he asked, laughingly.

"No," she replied. "My mother said you looked like one, but I know you are not one."

"Then it is for myself she loves me," he thought. "Daisy," he continued, "I should like to tell you something; when you will decide for yourself whether you will be my wife or not. Years ago I loved some one—"

"I know," eagerly interrupted Daisy; "and she is dead."

"Dead to me," said Sir Clinton; but Daisy did not understand him aright.

He looked at the pure, uplifted face.

"My life and my love," he said, "the best of my hopes, all my happiness, died too. Daisy, I have no warm or fervent love, no heart to give any woman. I shall never be happy again; but if you will take what I have to give—a true and sincere esteem, a friendly liking, a keen desire for your happiness—I will do my best."

"But that," said Daisy, slowly, "is not love."

He was somewhat taken aback by her words, yet they were but a repetition of his own.

"It is not love, Daisy—you are right; but it is enough to marry on."

"Would you wish me to be your wife without your loving me?" asked Daisy.

He was at a loss to answer; he could not tell her what he had overheard, and that he was marrying her out of pity for her. He would not wound her by telling her the truth. What was he to say?

"The happiest marriages," he said, "are not always those which spring from the most frantic love. Daisy, be my wife—you shall not complain of want of happiness."

"Could I make you happy?" she asked, gently. "If I thought I could do that I would not hesitate. I care more for your happiness than for my own. I would do anything in the world for you."

"Then you shall do just this one thing I have asked you. You shall be my wife—will you, Daisy?"

She answered "yes," and so sealed her fate!

He took her hand in his, not to kiss it; even as he held it, the memory came to him of another hand, white and jeweled, that he had kissed with passionate kisses, then had refused even to touch. He drove that memory away. This girl who loved him was to be his wife.

So they were betrothed, and Daisy hardly understood the gleam of sunlight that had fallen at her feet. She said to herself, over and over again, that she was to marry Mr. Clifton, was to be his wife, but she did not realize it.

She looked up at him suddenly.

"Mr. Clifton," she said, "will you tell me what made you think of this all at once? Yesterday you spoke only of going away, and

hoped, on your return, to find me married and happy. You had not thought then of asking me to be your wife?"

"I had not, Daisy."

"Then what made you think of it?" she persisted. "I should not have thought that such an idea could have sprung up suddenly. What made you think of it?"

"That is my secret, Daisy," he replied, very gently. "It can not matter whether I thought of it one day or sixty beforehand. Perhaps I began to think how much I should miss you, and found out that I could not do without you."

"Was that it?" she asked, her whole face growing so tender and beautiful in the light of love that he could not bear to undeceive her. She took his hand and held it tightly clasped. "Was that it? I am so glad!" She almost sobbed as she spoke. "I thought perhaps you were marrying me because you felt sorry for me. You have made me so happy!"

As though by magic the lovely bloom came back to her face, the light to her eyes. She was once again the bright, happy girl he had known. The storm of love, and passion, and grief seemed to have passed over her and left her.

They walked on in silence; Daisy broke it first.

"When I am your wife," she said, "I shall never have to leave you."

"Never, Daisy; in life and in death we shall never be parted."

She smiled, and he thought he had never seen such perfect content, such perfect bliss, in any face.

"I am so glad!" she said. "But how strange it seems! I never thought that I would like to marry any one, and now I am going to marry you."

"There is one thing, Daisy," said Sir Clinton; "I have not altered my mind about going abroad—shall you be willing to leave your mother and come with me?"

"Yes; I love her very much, but I would follow you to the utmost bounds of the earth."

"Do you really love me so very much, Daisy?" he asked; and she made such an answer as satisfied him.

"Then you will be willing to waive all for me, and consent to our immediate marriage, Daisy; then to go to France with me?"

"Yes; I consent willingly," said Daisy. "Ah, me, I am so happy! When I got up this morning I wished the birds would cease to sing, and the sun to shine. I was so miserable that everything bright seemed to mock me."

"All for me, Daisy?"

"Yes; all for you, Mr. Clifton. Now it is quite different. If it would not be very undignified, I should like to dance from here to the garden gate; but I must not do that."

"Why not, Daisy?"

"If I am to be married I must learn to be grave and sedate; all ladies are so, I suppose."

Sir Clinton laughed. He could remember some married ladies not at all famed for their gravity or sedateness.

"You must not try to change yourself in one respect," he said.

"You are charming as you are—a perfect field daisy. You would be spoiled as a garden flower."

"Is that a compliment?" she asked dubiously.

"Yes; I have not paid you many compliments in my life, Daisy—have I?"

"You have paid me the greatest of all in asking me to be your wife," she said gently; and Sir Clinton, although he did not love her, felt pleased.

CHAPTER XX.

AN UNLOVED WIFE.

It was some hours before Mrs. Erne recovered from her surprise. Marry Daisy!—it seemed incredible. She had never noticed the least sign of love on his part for Daisy. He had been kind to her, and seemed to like her with him—but love! why she had never dreamed of it. Her distress had been great when she found that Daisy was so much attached to him; that it should end in marriage was wonderful to her.

She had no objection when Sir Clinton asked her the question. She took the corner of her apron in her hand, rubbing it very hard, as though to extract wisdom from it.

"What objection can I have, Mr. Clifton," she said, "if Daisy loves you and you love her? I shall lose her, it is true; but if she is happy I must not think of that."

"She will be happy," said Sir Clinton; "you may rest quite assured of that. I shall make her happiness my study."

Again Mrs. Erne looked up at him with a puzzled expression of face.

"You know we are very poor, sir," she said. "I need not tell you that Daisy has no money; but, if you will pardon me, she has no clothes fitted for one who is to be your wife. Daisy tells me she is to go away with you; she could not travel with you, sir, in her cottage dress."

"No; I am glad you thought of it. Get her what you can here, Mrs. Erne; I will buy more as we pass through Paris. Do not make her fine; she is a field daisy—let her keep her simplicity of taste."

Sir Clinton placed some money in the happy mother's hands.

"Go to Woodburn and purchase what she requires; see that it is done quickly. I hope to have our marriage over next week. I am anxious to get abroad."

He could not tell her how the very spirit of unrest was on him, and life in the cottage was growing unendurable to him.

Mrs. Erne looked to see what he had given her, and was almost horrified to find a bank-note for fifty pounds. Fifty pounds—all for dress! Why, she had never had so much in her life. She hardly knew how it was all to be spent.

"Even if I buy her silks and satins," she thought, "it will not take all that money."

But she took the delighted, happy, lovely Daisy with her.

With faltering steps they entered the first shop in Woodburn—a shop where before they had never dared to tread. Fifty pounds!

Surely money never gave such happiness before. For the first time Daisy's pretty feet were covered with well-fitting shoes, her delicate hands with dainty gloves. The stylish dress made such a change in her that Sir Clinton hardly knew her. Her mother made her dress herself in the pretty girlish costume, and show it to her lover. It was one of the loveliest sights in the world to see Daisy, her face crimson with blushes, standing so coyly before him, trying to hide her delight.

"Why, Daisy," he cried, startled into admiration, "you will turn out a perfect beauty on my hands."

"I wish I could," she said; "I should like to be so beautiful that every time you looked at me you would love me over again."

"Daisy," cried her mother, in a horrified voice, "how freely you speak! Mr. Clifton will think you have been strangely brought up."

"Mr. Clifton admires her frankness," said Sir Clinton.

And Mrs. Erne, thinking she might be one too many, went away.

"Do you really think I look nice?" said Daisy, shyly. "Are you really pleased with me?"

"How could I be anything else?" he asked.

"I am so grateful to you, Mr. Clifton. You are almost too good to me. See, I owe you everything in the world--my new life, my happiness, my love; and now, all these beautiful things. I wish I knew how to thank you."

He was quick at reading women's faces, and he knew by the wistful expression of Daisy's that she almost expected him to caress her. She had drawn near to him, and her little hand had stolen into his.

"I will try always to look so nice," she said, simply, "so that whenever your eyes fall upon me they may be gratified."

He would have given anything if he could so far have mastered himself as to bend down and kiss the lovely, dimpling, happy face; but he could not. Between Daisy and himself there lay the shadow of his unhappy love.

"God bless you, Daisy!" he said, almost involuntarily.

"God has helped me," she replied. "You do not know how I used to pray that I might go with you, and see how my prayer is granted."

That was a novel view of the subject to Sir Clinton; but Daisy looked so pure in her simple reverence he would not for worlds have disturbed it. He laid his hand on her shoulder, and spoke some kindly words of praise that made the girl's heart beat and her cheeks glow; that was in place of the kiss he should have given her and could not.

The next thing he did was to make Mrs. Erne happy by telling her of the little annuity he intended settling on her. It was not a large one, as he did not wish to arouse her suspicions as to his ways and means.

"I am taking your daughter away from you," he said; "but I will try to make amends by giving you the means of living in comfort and in peace."

She thanked him; but it was to Daisy she opened her heart, sobbing out her gratitude.

"How dearly he must love you, Daisy, when he does all this for me," she said. "Only think, I shall be able to rest at last, to keep a little servant, and to have a friend every now and then to tea!"—the height of her simple ambition, beyond which she had never looked.

"Do you really think he loves me so much, mother?" asked Daisy.

"If he did not," was the logical answer, "why should he do all this?"

"I have never seen any one—any one in love," stammered Daisy.

"Was my father like him?"

"No; your father used to call me all kinds of pet names, and he would have walked fifty miles, so he said, to kiss my hand; but all people differ. Your Mr. Clifton shows his love in actions more than in words. You are a fortunate girl."

There was little trouble over the marriage—money can do so much. Sir Clinton procured a special license, and made all arrangements himself.

Yet, even while busied over them, even with Daisy's happy voice singing in his ears, with her happy, bright face before his eyes, with all this knowledge of the intensity of happiness his love had brought her, there were times when his heart misgave him, and he did not see how he was to endure it. There were times when he would cheerfully have sacrificed all his fortune, almost his life, to Daisy, to have freed himself from his promise; there were times when, in his desperation, he thought it would be easier to die than to call any other woman, save Lady May, his wife—when he would have gone away and never returned. One thought alone restrained him—it was of Daisy's broken heart. No other should suffer for him, he thought, what he had suffered for Lady May.

Daisy was satisfied; she did not know what was passing in his mind. If she saw him grave, sad, or abstracted, she said to herself that he was thinking of his dead friend. She never disturbed him then by one word. She was so quiet and gentle, so anxious about him, so studious of his every look and word, that he must have been more than human not to have been touched by it. So he trod down, beat back, with strong, fierce hands, the thought of the love that had been torture and madness to him. He tried to say to himself that he was ungrateful for the good things God had given him; that he had wealth, health, strength; that he would have a gentle, loving, lovely wife, with whom he might be happy, if he could only forget Lady May.

Then he would raise his face with a despairing cry to the smiling heaven; was he never to forget her?—was he never to lose the memory of that which maddened him?—was he to suffer all his life because that royally beautiful woman had duped and deceived him?

He fell asleep one day in the hay-fields. The sun was shining warmly on him, the fragrance of the newly-mown hay and the hawthorn floating around him, the song of the birds, the soft cooing of the wood pigeons, the whisper of the sweet, western wind had lulled him to sleep, and he was happy in a dream. He dreamed that all his quarrel and parting, all his trouble, sorrow, and madness, his

long illness, had been a fancy, that they had never really happened, and that Lady May stood by him with a loving smile on her beautiful face, telling him the church bells were ringing, for it was their wedding-day. He clasped her in his arms, covering her face with kisses, telling her he loved her with a love stronger than death, and she, in his dream, clasped her white arms round his neck, saying, "So I love you, my love;" and then the very ecstasy of his happiness woke him.

It was all a dream—only a dream.

He buried his face in his hands, and cried aloud. In dreams, the fair face of his lost love haunted him, her voice whispered sweet words to him; then he would wake, despairing, almost mad. It is a terrible thing when a man gives the whole of his heart and the strength of his manhood to one deep, intense passion. He loved one woman with his whole heart and soul, yet he was on the point of marrying another. It was well for Daisy that she did not know much about love or lovers, or surely she would have found out what was wanting; as it was, he was kind to her, and she was content.

The wedding-day came—it was never forgotten: a warm, brilliant day in June, when the sky was so deeply, darkly blue, and the sun so bright, that the world seemed all gold and blue. Such a quiet wedding-day! Daisy woke with the first sunbeam, happy and light of heart as the birds that sung beneath the window, beautiful as the blooming flowers. Her wedding-day! Poor, unloved Daisy, all unconscious of what she had missed; all unconscious of the warmth of love that should be hers; all unconscious that long before the day dawned a white, haggard face was watching the dawn, a wearied, desperate soul crying vainly for help—never dreaming that this, her wedding-day, which was to her the very climax of her happiness, was to him as the day of doom.

They were married at the church of St. Stephen, in Woodburn. Mrs. Erne was the only witness of the marriage. Daisy would not ask any of the shopkeepers' daughters to be her bride-maids, even though she was marrying a gentleman, and they would, perhaps, dislike to act for her. Pretty, blushing, lovely Daisy was too shy to notice that her husband's name was written Clinton Adair; she never noticed that the minister used it. She could only think one thing, and it was that she was now his wife.

A quiet wedding, with the brilliant sun shining and all nature laughing—one light, happy heart, and one sad with the sadness of death. They did not return to the cottage when that wedding was over; Daisy had said good-by to her old home. They went to a hotel in Woodburn, where Sir Clinton ordered a quiet lunch, and gladdened Mrs. Erne with a glass of good wine.

They were to go by rail to Dover, and to cross to Calais by the night boat. The luggage had all gone on, and there was nothing left to trouble about.

So, when the luncheon was over, Sir Clinton went out while the mother and daughter said "good-by." He was tender of heart, and could not endure the sight of a woman's tears. Then the fly came that was to take them to the station, and, turning gravely to Daisy when they were alone, he said:

“It has been a trial for you, parting with your mother; Daisy; but I must try to prevent you from missing her.”

And Daisy clung to him, crying out that she should miss nothing in the wide world now that she had him. Even then, though he was touched by her gentle beauty, by her loveliness, by her emotion—even then he did not kiss her face.

CHAPTER XXI.

HUSBANDS CONTRASTED.

IN the south of France, where sunny seas kissed the shores, where the orange and the myrtle, the olive and vine grew in luxuriance; where flowers of sweetest odor made the air faint with perfume; where birds sung songs that they never sing in England—there Sir Clinton had made his home. He had cut himself off from his old life, he had forgotten old friends, old habits; he tried to begin his life from the time he married Daisy. They lived in a lovely little villa on the shores of the sunny southern sea. No visitors, no letters, no papers came to mar his idea of isolation. He had brought with him an enormous quantity of books, he cultivated his taste for sketching, he busied himself in trying to educate Daisy, he found for himself a thousand occupations; he interested himself in the beautiful gardens that surrounded the villa, he studied hard for several hours in the day, and all this he did with the one sole object and hope of forgetting Lady May. He honestly did his best to forget her; he turned as resolutely from the thought of her as he would have turned from the temptation to commit a mortal crime.

Yet how was it? He painted, sketched, drew, but every face his pencil traced was like hers. No matter how he tried, her beautiful mouth, her proud, bright eyes, the lovely hues of her face and neck were sure to creep in. If he wrote, as he often did, pretty little poems, how was it he felt compelled to make every other line rhyme with May? She had such complete and perfect possession of his whole being that, do as he would, he could not separate himself from her. More than once Daisy asked him to take some English newspaper, and it was almost the only wish that he ever refused her.

“I do not care to know English news, Daisy,” he said; “and if you read it, I am sure you would repeat it to me.”

He had a nervous, morbid dread of reading her name, of reading of her progress, of parties, balls, or *soirées* given by the Duchess of Rosecarn; he dreaded to read of her beauty and her fame, lest, remembering how she had duped him, and how he had loved her, the old madness should break out and destroy him. He had left England, and he had no wish to see it, to hear of it again; the past was all dead—buried—the old love slain; he was trying his best to make Daisy happy and forget the rest. He did his best; every wish and whim of hers was gratified; he tried to think of everything that would be likely to please her, of everything that could in the least conduce to her happiness; he made her, as he had said he would, his study.

She wondered why he dreaded the name of England, why he never talked to her of the past, why he carefully avoided all topics except those of her present life and ways.

He was not happy; the handsome face that had first won Lady May's attention was worn and haggard; the eyes were shadowed as those of one who had a constant abiding care; he never laughed; seldom smiled, except when it was to please Daisy; he was grave, sad, silent, standing always, as it were, by the grave of his lost love. He tried by constant occupation to create an interest in his present life, but there were times when he failed most miserably; there were hours and hours when his pretty young wife sung to him, talked to him, and he never heard either a note of her music or one word that she said. He owned to himself that it was a terrible thing to love as he had loved, a fearful thing to place one's life and heart, one's love and soul, in a woman's hand. He spent no time in lamenting or mourning; he spent no time in dreaming of a past he dreaded; but to an attentive observer one look at his face was enough to show that he was in very truth a most miserable man.

He made no acquaintances in that fair land. Sunny hearted Frenchmen would fain have given kindly greeting to the reserved, sad Englishman and his fair young wife.

"Why is it?" they asked each other, with wondering faces. "He is rich; he has a fine house, a lovely wife. How wonderful are the ways of an Englishman!—he has all this, yet is not happy."

He had been there for two years, and had made no acquaintances. He grew thinner and paler; the constant struggle was wearing his strength away. He had sworn to do right, but he could not forget his lost love—he could not love Daisy even as he had hoped to love her. The only comfort he had was in thinking this life would not last forever, and after it was ended, if nothing better, there would at least be oblivion. He had been all that was kind and generous to Daisy; he had studied to speak cheerfully to her, to smile, to look interested; he was passive when she laid her white arms on his and told him how dearly she loved him. She was learning Italian with him, and it was pretty to hear how she called him—

"Life of my life, my soul, my heart, my all."

It was pretty to see her kiss his hands, never dreaming of kissing his face. She was growing very lovely and graceful, this simple field daisy; her hands had grown soft and white, they had lost all trace of work; she had lost the slight country accent that he had once thought almost pretty. It had been one of his occupations to educate her; he had her taught French and Italian; Daisy could sing gay French chansons and Italian airs—she had developed into a most charming, accomplished woman.

Quite content—that was the great beauty of it—quite content with her lot; loving him with the same enthusiastic love, yet never finding out what was wanted in him; never exacting, always humble, docile, submissive; content if at rare intervals he laid his hand caressingly on her soft, brown hair, and said, "My pretty Daisy;" content if once in a way he took her pretty hand and held it clasped in his own; content if he spoke kindly to her and seemed to remember she was there. Not an exacting wife—not a wife likely to be

tiresome or jealous. It was simply that he remained passive under the greatness of her love, and made no return.

If any one had asked her was she happy, she would have answered, "Most perfectly so." She knew no higher happiness than that of being always with him, and being allowed to love him. She had seen so little of the world, so little of life, so little of marriages, that she probably thought the normal state of things was that the wife should do all the petting, coaxing, persuading, and the husband be the dignified recipient of her love.

So, while pretty Daisy was ignorant, she was happy, knowing nothing higher or better; but the time was coming when she was to awake to the fact that all the love was on her side.

Some repairs were required at the villa, and Sir Clinton, who had a loathing for the smell of paint and varnish, said, while they were being executed, they would go to the pretty little watering-place called Leville, a few miles distant; the change would do them good. Daisy was nothing loath. There was one thing Sir Clinton said to himself—there would be no English there—Leville was quite out of the way of the English. They went, and remained for some days at the Hôtel Deprey—a charming house, standing on the brow of a hill. There were few people, but after a day or two, to the intense amazement of Sir Clinton, and the secret delight of Daisy, an English gentleman came with his young wife, Mr. and Mrs. De Grey.

When Sir Clinton heard it his first impulse was to fly, but he found Mr. De Grey as shy and retired as he was himself. Many days passed, during which they merely exchanged the tourists' civilities at table; then, seeing that neither of them had the least desire to make the other's acquaintance, they spoke occasionally. Daisy studied them—they were the first people she had seen in her new sphere of life, and she was struck with the difference between them and her own husband. She used to look with wonder at Mr. De Grey.

Sir Clinton was always attentive to her, after the fashion of a well-bred gentleman; but when Mr. De Grey did anything for his wife, it was as though he did it for love of her, and not because it was etiquette. Then she heard the caressing words; she saw that he never left the house without coming to kiss his wife, and always did the same on his return.

The two ladies had grown to like each other, and Sir Clinton saw no possible inconvenience could arise from that. The De Greys were not quite of his class, and if Daisy liked to spend her time with them it was all right, he never objected. So the two young wives walked out together, and very frequently Daisy would go to Mrs. De Grey's rooms.

Then she saw the difference between a loved and an unloved wife. Mr. De Grey never seemed happy away from his wife; he left her with regret, and sought her presence with avidity. They soon became accustomed to Daisy, and made no stranger of her. Then she heard words that were new to her.

"Does your husband always call you darling?" she asked Mrs. De Grey one day; and the wife who was loved looked at her with a smile, and answered:

"Yes—does not yours?"

"Oh, no!" cried Daisy, shrinking from the question—she hardly knew why; "it is quite a new word to me."

"I think it is a very pretty word," said little Mrs. De Grey, "and I like my husband to use it."

Another time, when both ladies were in Mrs. De Grey's room, her husband brought in a beautiful spray of orange blossoms.

"Kate, let me be your hair-dresser," he said; and he fastened it in the glossy coils of her hair.

She laughed at him.

"Orange blossoms are for brides, not for wives," she said.

"You will always be a bride to me," Daisy heard him whisper, "the fairest wife, the sweetest bride the world holds."

Then he bent down and kissed his wife's face.

Daisy looked on in mute wonder. Why, what kind of husband and wife were these? Her husband never called her darling, never placed flowers in her hair, never kissed her. There must be something wrong; they were certainly different.

That same day she went up to Mrs. De Grey, with a sly, blushing face.

"I could not help hearing all your husband said to you this morning: does he—you will not be angry with me—does he often kiss you?"

The merriest peal of laughter she had ever heard came from Mrs. De Grey.

"Kiss me—Charley kiss me? Why, of course he does. I often feel quite vexed when my hair looks nice; he does not care. What a strange question! Does your husband never kiss you?"

"Never," replied Daisy, feeling as though she were very much behind the rest of the world. "I do not remember that he has ever kissed me. Is it such a great sign of love?"

"I do not believe," said Mrs. De Grey, brusquely, "that there is much love without it."

Then seeing the sudden keen pain on Daisy's face, she hastened to add:

"People differ so, it is impossible to judge; my husband is one of the demonstrative kind—perhaps yours is not."

She spoke kindly, but Daisy pondered much in secret over it. It came home to her with full, cruel force, that outwardly, at least, her husband did not show any great signs of love for her.

CHAPTER XXII.

DIED OF LOVE.

FROM that time Daisy's desire to know the truth became irresistible—did her husband love her with real love or not? True, as Mrs. De Grey said, there were many kinds of love, many ways of showing it. Some were demonstrative, others were not; but surely all love must have a soul in it. Was there any soul in the great, kindly affection that her husband showed to her? She sat one day in the pretty, vine-wreathed summer-house thinking it over—trying to decide for herself whether he loved her or not. She could remember

how often, when she spoke to him suddenly, he looked at her with dazed, dreamy eyes, as though he had forgotten even her existence, and was suddenly reminded of it; how often the sound of her voice seemed to recall him from Cloudland. He spent quite the half of his life in thoughts, and dreams, and memories, in which she had no share.

One day she was reading to him from a selection of Irish ballads—they still kept up that custom; Daisy liked nothing better than those evenings when, while the sun set over the purple hills and the blue sea, she read to him. Did he hear every word that fell from those kindly, loving lips? It was to be feared not; but on this evening he seemed more abstracted than ever, and she had chosen, from all others, the lovely ballad, "Waiting for the May." He did not seem to pay much attention until he heard the refrain, "I am weary, I am weary, waiting for the May." She saw him start at the sound of the last word.

"What is that, Daisy?—what about May?" The words left his lips with a violent effort. "What about May?" he repeated.

And she read calmly:

"'I am weary, I am weary, waiting for the May.'"

He left his seat.

"Do not read any more, Daisy," he said; "I can not bear any more."

And the next minute, to her surprise, he was walking with rapid steps down the road that led to the sea. Ah, Heaven, how true it was! he was faint, he was weary—wearied, longing for the May. The sound of the familiar word thrilled him with keenest pain, with passionate love.

"May! May!" he cried aloud, and the waves seemed to re-echo the sound.

He flung himself despairingly on the sands. Oh, Heaven! if he could end it—end this passionate, terrible love, or die! To think that a man should be so unmanned! He cried shame on himself; he called himself weak, cowardly—he reproached himself with bitter words; yet the burning love was there, the passionate, despairing—love that was never to grow less. He hated himself for his weakness, yet he wished that, as he lay there, the waves would wash over him and bear him away. He should be happy in death, not in life; he could not find rest or peace. Then he stood up in the starlight, and, raising his face to the high heavens, he prayed that he might live down the love that was destroying him.

"I wish to be an honest, upright man," he said to himself, "I have no desire for wrong; I have a faithful, tender, innocent wife—I pray Heaven that I may be faithful to her; I have no wish that even a thought should stray from her."

Then, when he was calm, and the fiery tempest had in some degree passed, he went home; but, as he went, the waves seemed to chant and the wind to sing:

"I am weary, I am weary, waiting for the May!"

Daisy was standing out among the orange-trees, waiting for him with an anxious face. She had a name for him, such as most loving, fanciful wives have for their husbands. In learning Italian

she had been struck with the liquid melody of the words. She looked up at him one day as she was studying her lesson.

"Caro," she said; "that means dear."

"I think it means something a trifle dearer than dear," said Sir Clinton; "darling would be a better translation."

She went up to him timidly.

"I should like to call you Caro," she said, gently. "May I?"

"Yes, Daisy; I shall be delighted to hear such a pretty word from your lips. Call me Caro, if you like."

Then she ventured more than she had ever done before; she raised her tender eyes to his face.

"Are you really Caro?" she said. "I know that I love you, but do you love me?"

"Why, what a question, Daisy, eighteen months after marriage; pray, what rivals have you here? Whom else have I to love, save the sweet wife who loves me?"

Still, as she remembered afterward, he did not say that he loved her. She never forgot that.

So Daisy went up to him now.

"Caro," she said, "I was growing alarmed; why did you start off in that strange fashion? Was there anything in what I read that distressed you? I thought that ballad so charming, Caro. Tell me, did the friend you loved die in May?"

Evidently simple Daisy had no idea of May as a woman's name.

"No," he replied, hurriedly. "I am capricious, Daisy; never let my whims trouble you. I have not been quite the same since that long illness."

She took his hand between her own, and kissed it lovingly.

"It was a cruel illness to you," she said, "but a kind one to me—it sent you to me. I should like to have known you before that, when you were bright and happy."

"Am I not happy now, Daisy?" he asked, touched by her gentle, loving manner.

"Sometimes, I fancy not quite," she replied.

"Then I tell you what, Daisy," he said, looking down at the pure young face, so fair in the moonlight, "if I am not happy with you, I ought to be ashamed of myself. No man ever had a more loving wife."

He knew it; yet all night, as the wind sighed through the trees, and the waves broke on the shore, they seemed to murmur:

"I am weary, waiting for the May."

Daisy thought much of this little episode; to her it had no meaning. What could May mean more than June or July? Yet there was evidently something in her husband's mind about it. After this she purposely mentioned the word; she talked of flowers in May, of England in May; and she saw that he winced from the word as though it hurt him.

"He has had some great trouble in May," thought Daisy, "but I shall never know what it is—he will never tell me, I am only outside his life, after all."

Did he love her? Daisy yet dreaded to know. Was he different to other husbands? He was better than some—he had never been unkind to her—he had never refused her a request, denied her a

wish; he had always treated her with kindness and courtesy. But was that a sure sign of love? He had laughed often and often at the dreadful ideas she had entertained about matrimony before her marriage; he had explained to her that it was only in the lowest class, in the most brutal of men, the most debased and degraded, that there was such a thing as wife-beating or personal unkindness. So that his courtesy to her might not arise from love. She would have given all she had to find out whether he did love her or not. She was always making excuses now to go out, in order that she might watch the behavior of other married people. Outwardly, she did not see much difference; but on faces of other men she did not read indifference, restlessness—that vague sorrow which she saw on her husband's face, neither did she see wives anxious and wistful as herself. Daisy found that, among most of the husbands and wives she met, there was a friendly, kindly understanding—they had but one interest, one way in life.

It happened, among other places, that Sir Clinton took her once to see a famous old cemetery near the sunny sea—a cemetery so beautiful in its surroundings and in itself, that people brought their dead from far and near to be interred there.

Sir Clinton never forgot that day. It was not often that Daisy impressed him—she did then. It was an Italian day, the sun warm and bright, the deep blue sky marvelous in color; the air was filled with perfume from the vines and olives; a thousand fair flowers were in bloom; the birds were singing in the trees, and the waves seemed to kiss the golden shores. The graves in the cemetery of St. Marie Pierre were beautiful, many of them covered with festoons of vine leaves, roses, and lilies, all round them. Daisy watched them silently. Their guide told them many a sad little story; here was the grave of a girl only eighteen; of a young mother who died with her babe in her arms; of the father who lay there, leaving so many little ones to lament him; there were the little graves where lay the innocent children so pleasing to God.

“It does not seem like dying,” said Daisy, “to lie here among these flowers, the shadows of the vine leaves lying so lightly, the sun shining so warmly, the birds singing so sweetly—it is not like dying to lie here.”

Then the guide showed them a beautiful grave; it was covered with festoons of vine leaves; tall white leaves grew over it, rich red roses grew near it.

“That is the prettiest grave in the cemetery,” said Daisy, thoughtfully.

“And it has the saddest story,” said the guide. “Husband and wife sleep there. They came once, soon after their marriage, to see this cemetery, and I never saw anything like them. It was like looking at a picture or reading a poem to watch them.”

“Why?” interrupted Daisy, hastily.

“Because he loved her so,” was the reply; “his whole soul seemed wrapped up in her. I only saw them that once, but I never forgot them. Ten months afterward she was brought here to be buried, and they told me how beautiful she looked in her coffin, holding her little dead babe in her arms.

“Then, meladi,” continued the guide, for he spoke exclusively

to Daisy, thinking the subject would please her—"then, after she was buried, the young husband came here every day, no matter what the weather—sunshine, rain, or snow—he came; and he would sit by her grave for hours. Once some of his friends followed him, and remonstrated with him.

"You will kill yourself," they said.

"My heart is dead," he replied; "it is buried here: what matter how soon my body follows? I would rather lie dead in my wife's grave than living elsewhere."

"Day by day we watched him growing thinner, paler, more worn, and haggard; day by day he stayed longer near her grave, and seemed more unwilling to leave it; and one evening, when the gates of the cemetery were about to be closed, remembering that he was still here, I came in search of him, *meladi*. He lay dead, with his arms over her grave, and his face buried in the flowers. *Meladi*, they say men never die for love; this man did."

Daisy looked up at him with a wondering expression on her face.

"Died of love," she said. "He loved his wife so dearly that he could not live without her, so he died."

Then Daisy, turning round to her husband, said:

"Did you hear that story, Caro?"

"Yes," replied Sir Clinton; "I heard every word of it."

"And do you believe it—do you believe that a man ever died from love?"

He looked far away over the hills and the blue sea; he, whom love had driven mad, looked dreamily, sadly out on the fair, bright world.

"Yes, I believe it, Daisy," he said; "love is not the plaything and pastime that some people would make it. It is a blessing or a curse, it is happiness or despair."

Then she looked at him with a sweet, wistful expression in her eyes.

"Caro," she said, gently, "could you ever die for love of me?"

He looked down at her; great tears were shining in her eyes; her lips trembled. What could he say? In the depths of his heart he knew well that he had no such love for her.

"My dear Daisy," he said, trying to smile, "this pretty cemetery gives you gloomy ideas; is it not better to live for love than to die for it?"

"He evades my question," thought Daisy; "he always does when it is about love."

She was silent for a few minutes, then she said:

"Caro, will you make me one promise?"

"Yes," he replied, briefly.

"Promise that when I die you will bring me here—you will bury me here; and, Caro, I should like to lie near this beautiful grave, near the grave of the man who died for love. You will not forget?"

"I will not even listen; and, Daisy, you shall not stay in this melancholy place any longer."

He took her away at once, but they, neither of them, forgot the cemetery of St. Marie Pierre.

CHAPTER XXIII.

DAISY'S TEST.

THREE years have passed since Sir Clinton Adair took his young wife to the land of the olive and the vine. Daisy had grown into an elegant woman; her fair face retained the innocence of childhood, and had gained the loveliness of womanhood; it was a beautiful face, pure and fair, with sad sweet eyes, and sad sweet lips.

Daisy had learned the truth at last. She knew now that love of her did not fill her husband's life; she was, as it were, outside his life; she had no share in its inmost depths. He had thoughts, fancies, memories, dreams in which she had no share. Slowly, sorrowfully, sadly, Daisy had awakened to the knowledge of the truth. Only by degrees; her own great love had quickened her instinct. She judged him by herself; and how far he was wanting! No; he did not love her. She noticed little things; his face never brightened for her. If she entered a room where he was, he looked pleased; he had always a kindly smile for her; but that brightness which only comes from the heart's love never overspread his face for her; nor if he heard a strain of sweet music, if he read the words of a song, did his thoughts ever wander to her. The perfume of flowers, the gleam of the stars, the murmur of the waves, did not make him think of her. Nothing ever seemed to bring them nearer together, no sweet impulse ever drew him to her; there was no accord between them; the love was all on her side, and none on his.

Daisy did not judge quickly or rashly; she deliberated long before she came to this conclusion. Then another thing began to puzzle her—if he did not love her, why had he married her? Daisy could not account for that. The only gleam of hope or comfort she had lay in her utter inability to discover any motive in his marriage except love. It could not be for her beauty—he who had traveled far and wide must surely have seen women far more beautiful than she; it could not be for any worldly motive, seeing that she was poor, humble, and unknown.

Then a little hope would come to Daisy, and she would say to herself, "He must have loved me a little;" for that he had overheard her conversation with her mother, and had married her from sheer pity, Daisy never dreamed. She was not jealous as yet, for she did not think he had ever loved any one else—he never mentioned any other woman's name. Then would Daisy sigh faintly, and think to herself what a problem life was—what a grand puzzle this love which occupied all her thoughts.

The next scene in the tragedy was that Sir Clinton Adair began to weary of the monotony of his life. Until now it had seemed to him the blow which had struck him down was so great that there could be no rebound. He had believed that there remained nothing for him but to remain a few years in exile, then die.

Now he was stronger, and the strength of his manhood, the force of his character, the nobility of mind and soul, began to rebel

against the useless life. A certain longing for the strife, a desire to be once more in the battle-field of life, came over him. Was he to die without having done one single great or good deed? Was a woman's hand to slay him so entirely that even the talents and the gifts which Heaven had given him were useless? He had suffered his pain, and now he longed to be back in the arena. There was another thing which made him feel that the wisest thing he could do was to go back to the world and work. He had sought that retirement in order that in solitude he might learn to forget his fatal love, but solitude increased its intensity. He had nothing but leisure, and leisure was not good for him. If he looked dreamily to the shining skies, he saw there the face of Lady May; the luscious perfume of the flowers, the music of the birds, the soft, whispering wind, all brought her back to him. She haunted his solitude—perhaps in the busy turmoil of the world there would be less room for her.

He meant to do right before God and man; no thoughts of sin or wrong-doing entered his mind. He was cursed with a haunting sorrow and a haunting memory; but he meant no wrong. He intended to be a kind, faithful husband to Daisy, to live with her in peace and harmony; he had no dream of evil.

But he must go away; he must find work to do; he must run in the strife of the world, take his place in its ranks. He said to himself that he would go back to England—not to Eastwold, the home he had brightened for Lady May; not there just yet; but he would go to London; he would see what was going on in the world; he would resume some of his long-neglected duties. He said to himself that he would be very careful—that he would never voluntarily look upon the face of Lady May, “Duchess of Rosecarn by this time,” he thought.

“No, I will not voluntarily meet her; I will not throw myself into the way of temptation. I may not love Daisy, but I will be true to her.”

He resolved upon going, and all that remained was for him to tell Daisy. He had kept his real name, his title, and fortune a secret from her, partly because he liked to think she loved him for himself, and partly because he wanted no one word to remind him of the past. He pictured to himself Daisy's wonderment, Daisy's surprise.

“It will be a case of Lord Burleigh over again,” he said to himself. “I shall take her in the time to come to Eastwold, and tell her she is Lady Adair.”

She would well become the position and title. He had called her a field-daisy, but she was not a field-flower now; there was no truer lady in all the land than Daisy Adair.

“Daisy,” said Sir Clinton, as they walked one evening by the sea-shore—“Daisy, are you not growing tired of this life?”

“Tired?” she replied; “no. What life could be more beautiful?”

“But we see no one, we hear nothing, we know nothing of what is going on in the world—we are buried alive.”

“I thought that was what you liked best, and wished for most,”

said Daisy. "Why, Caro, you would never consent to see or know any one."

"I feel better now," he said, "stronger, and the morbid dislike I had to my kind is dying away. I want to go into the world again, Daisy; there is nothing to do here, nothing to give an interest in life."

He did not see the mute reproach of the sweet, sad eyes raised to his.

No interest in life, when she was with him—nothing to live for when he had her! Daisy grew sick and faint, a feeling of despair came over her. She was less than nothing to him—why had he married her?

"I thought," he said, "of going back to England and remaining there for some time; I shall see then what there is to do. After all, these efforts at occupation that I make are wretched enough. Books and languages are not enough to fill a man's life and thoughts."

"You have me," said Daisy, faintly; but he did not even hear her.

She turned from him with a sigh of despair.

"Stay, Daisy," he said; "I want to discuss my plans with you. What do you say to returning to England next week?"

"I say anything you like," was the gentle reply. "Your pleasure is always mine."

Again he did not seem to hear the reply.

Daisy took courage. She raised her face to his.

"Tell me, Caro," she said, "how it is that we are so different? You say you have no interest in life here; I say that you fill my life so exclusively I have room for nothing else. What makes the difference?"

He could have told her in one moment the difference lay between love and the want of it. He laughed carelessly, not sufficiently interested in the question to think of it—not loving her well enough to understand what prompted it.

"I do not know, Daisy; you should study metaphysics, if such questions interest you—they are quite beyond me. What train shall we travel by? I am almost longing to start."

How little he cared—dear Heaven, how little he loved her! Her face had grown pale even to the lips; he did not notice it. Her eyes were heavy with unshed tears; he did not see them. The girl-wife turned away with the bitterness of death in her heart; he saw nothing of it. He went on talking to her, while a desperate resolve formed itself in her mind.

He did not love her. Life with her was so monotonous for him he could not endure it; she was but a burden to him. Why he had married her Heaven only knew—she did not; she could not fathom the motive. She was a burden to him, entering on this new life, this fresh phase of his existence. She would not intrude herself on him; he should go to England without her. At first the idea overwhelmed her; then she thought to herself it would be a fair test of his love. If he refused to allow her to remain, then she should know that, in spite of all appearances, he loved her. If, on the contrary, he was willing to go without her, then she should know he did not care for her.

There was a nightingale singing in the darkening wood, there was a sweet, western wind breathing over the flowers that evening when Daisy tried her test.

"Caro," she said, "I have something to say to you."

"I am listening, Daisy," he replied.

"I do not want to go back to England with you just yet; I would rather stay here for a short time."

Her heart was beating so quickly and so loudly, it seemed to her that he must hear it; her pulse throbbed—it seemed that her very soul was listening for the answer that was to be so much or so little to her. He did not seem much surprised, and there was no start of dismay, no exclamation of wonder; he did not even turn around to see if she were jesting or not.

"You do not want to go to England. Why, Daisy, are you in love with this land of the olive and the vine?"

"Should you mind going without me?" Daisy asked, falteringly.

"Mind! No, not at all. I only mind one thing, Daisy, as you phrase it—that is, that you should in every respect please yourself."

"I wish I had no self to please," said Daisy. "And, Caro, you are quite sure—"

"Yes; I am sure. I am equally pleased whether you remain here or go with me."

Something like an excess of despair came over her; she said to herself that it would be better if she could know the truth, the whole of it, at once.

"You will not miss me, Caro?" she said.

The wistful look of the tender eyes, the wistful sound of her low voice, were all unheeded by him. He felt some slight wonder, if the real truth be told, some slight pique, that Daisy could do so well without him—Daisy, who had always seemed wrapped up in him, who had professed herself dull and unhappy if he were only half an hour away. He felt something like surprise; it was so new for Daisy to be indifferent to him. It was a lady's whim, he supposed, and, as such, he ought not to wonder at it.

"Shall I miss you, Daisy?" he repeated. "'The matter is so entirely one of your own choosing, I can not say. I shall be very much occupied on my return to England. You can remain here for the summer, if you like, and I will come for you at the end of autumn.'"

"Very well," said Daisy, faintly. "He seemed glad that I should remain; he seemed pleased to be without me; he cares nothing about it."

She turned away lest he should read the sorrow on her face. He went on talking to her about the journey with all the calm unconcern imaginable.

"You must send some handsome presents to your mother, Daisy," he said; "though I suppose she would rather have one look at your face than anything you could send her."

"My poor mother!" said Daisy. "She did love me."

"Of course she did," he replied, not understanding the gist of her speech. "I should like you to choose her something—a handsome black velvet dress."

"That would not be suitable for her," interrupted Daisy; "it would be too grand."

"We will risk it," said Sir Clinton, "and I shall go down to Fernvale myself to take it."

"Shall you?" asked Daisy, her pale face brightening.

"Yes, and I shall tell your mother you are so greatly in love with this fair land of France that you could not leave it, even for her."

And that was all he understood about it.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SIR CLINTON SURPRISED.

NEVER a word said Daisy. She helped her husband in all his packing, she arranged his books and papers.

"I need not take those," said Sir Clinton. "I shall be back in the autumn; I can take them then."

She did not complain or reproach him, but day by day she grew poorer and thinner; her eyes grew more sad, her smile came less frequently. He was kind to her, but he did not notice the change; even had he done so, he would never have attributed it to anything connected with himself. It was her own wish to remain—he did not know that that wish was prompted by his indifference to her. She saw that from the hour he decided on returning to England, his spirits grew higher and lighter; she heard him singing once, some sweet little snatch of song—a thing he had never done since they had been married; he generally walked about like a man overburdened with gloom. He sung and laughed, he talked gayly about some friends whom he hoped to meet, he seemed better and brighter than he had been for years.

"He is relieved to get away from me," thought Daisy, "the very thought of it has cheered him. Why did he marry me?"

He made continual careless references to the time when he should be gone, unconscious that each one was as a sword in his young wife's heart. Then the day came when his preparations were all completed, and it was time to start.

He was cheerful and smiling when he went to bid her adieu.

"You are quite sure, Daisy, that you do not repent?" he said. "It is not too late, if you would like to go; I will wait until to-morrow."

"I do not repent," she replied. "You will enjoy being by yourself."

He did not contradict it, though she would have given the whole world to have heard him say it was not so.

He held her tight in his arms, and kissed her.

"Good-by, Daisy," he said; "take care of yourself, enjoy yourself, have everything you want; and if you feel dull, be sure that you write and tell me so; then I shall come for you at once."

The next moment he was gone. If he had turned his head, he would have seen that Daisy, his wife, had fallen like one dead to the ground; but he never turned to look at her, and so went on to his doom.

It was strange to be in England again, to hear the well-known tongue on all sides, to see the familiar white cliffs, to feel at home. A few hours and he was in London—London, the scene of his love and his sorrow. Man-like, the first place he went to was his club; there he knew that he should hear all the news, all the rumors of the day; there, without having to ask any questions himself, he would hear all there was to tell.

He was most warmly welcomed. Sir Clinton Adair had always been a great favorite in society, and, when he was seen once again at the club, every one greeted him with delight. Where had he been? What had he been doing? He was overwhelmed with questions. What had induced him to leave England so suddenly? What made him stay away so long? He evaded all those questions—answered them jestingly, then sat down with a daily journal in his hands. One of his oldest friends, Sir Gregory Hartwell, came in, and was astounded at seeing him.

"I began to fancy, Adair, that we should never see you again. Where on earth have you been? What have you been doing away from home so long? We have heard all kinds of rumors about you."

"None of them true," said Sir Clinton. "The truth is, I had a severe accident, then a long illness; I went to France to recruit myself, and found myself so happy there I did not care to come home. There is no mystery in my absence, you see."

"But why did you never write to any of us?"

"I should imagine that the principal reason was because I had nothing to say," replied Sir Clinton, laughingly. "I suppose the world at home has gone on just as though I had been in it?"

"I suppose so; we are none of us missed for long—not even the best and cleverest. You have just reached home in time for the close of the season. I was at a grand ball last evening."

"Where was that?" asked Sir Clinton.

"It was one given by the Duchess of Rosecarn. She has given by far the best balls of the season."

He had nerved himself to hear her name; it might even be that he should be compelled to look on her face or to speak to her; it was quite impossible to tell what complications might arise. He had steeled himself, as he honestly believed.

"The Duchess of Rosecarn?" he said. "I knew both the duke and the duchess when I left England."

"They were only married last year," said Sir Gregory.

"They were not married when I knew them, although there was some idea of it even then. How is the duke?"

He longed to say "How is the duchess?" but his courage failed him. His heart beat, his pulses thrilled at the sound of her name. He did not even hear Sir Gregory's answer.

"What folly!" he said to himself. "I, who ought to be, who swore to be, strong! I will—I will be master of myself! Neither her name, nor her face, nor her voice shall have power to move me!"

"How is the duchess?" he asked; and his friend wondered at the strange tone of his voice.

"She is what she always promised to be, the prettiest woman in London, and, I think, one of the most popular, too."

"She was always that," said Sir Clinton.

"No, not always, I think," replied Sir Gregory. "She altered very much after her marriage."

Then he went on to speak of some other friends whom Sir Clinton had known.

"Altered since her marriage! How was that?—in what way?" he tried to think. "Was she more or less beautiful, more or less amiable, more or less proud? How had she altered?"

He would have given anything to know, not that it concerned him particularly, but it is always interesting to hear of a change in a person one has known well.

He was overwhelmed with invitations, but he steadfastly refused them. He was not going to place himself in the way of temptation. Lady Sant pressed him to come to her entertainments.

"You will meet the Duke and Duchess of Rosecarn," she said, "and the duke is so much improved since his marriage."

"It is a great inducement," he replied, "but I must decline."

He laughed bitterly to himself when Lady Sant had gone away.

"So much improved, has he? Lady May has improved him, I suppose—taught him elocution, perhaps, among other accomplishments! I did not know that there was room for improvement in his grace!"

He began to wonder if, after all, he had done wisely in returning. If he was to hear continually about Lady May, he had better have remained in France.

Two nights afterward he went with some friends to a concert, given at the mansion of a great princess, for a charitable purpose. Sir Gregory joined him there.

"We shall have all the celebrities of London here to-night," he said, "and, among others, the Duke and Duchess of Rosecarn."

"I do not think I shall remain," he said, hastily.

He was a strong man, but the thought of seeing her made him tremble like a reed in the wind. Then he reproached himself again for folly, for weakness.

"What is she to me now?" he said—"only another man's wife, just as I am another woman's husband. What can it matter whether I see her or not?"

"There is the duke," said Sir Gregory, "and the duchess, too. She is talking to Lady Sant, and Lady Sant is my particular aversion."

She was there. He did not look immediately, for a blood-red mist came before his eyes, the noise of rushing waters in his ears; he trembled like a leaf, then clinched his hands, and bit his lips, to keep himself steady.

"The duchess looks very lovely to-night," said Sir Gregory; "in my idea, she is the best-dressed woman in London."

He remembered her—dear Heaven! how well he remembered her, as she stood in the full glare of the light, her jewels gleaming, her proud eyes flashing scorn! How well he remembered the queenly gesture, the wave of the white hand, the cruel, cutting, bitter words that came from her lips! Was he mad, to run the risk of meeting her again?

"Do you think the duchess much changed?" asked Sir Gregory.

Then he raised his eyes and looked. Great Heaven, that was not Lady May!

"I do not see the duchess," he said, in a strange voice.

"Do you see the lady in the cream-colored brocade?—that is the duchess. She has a diamond tiara. She is talking to Lady Sant—you know Lady Sant?"

"Yes," he replied, slowly; "I know Lady Sant. Is that lady the Duchess of Rosecarn?"

"Yes; I thought you said you knew her," said Sir Gregory, almost impatiently. "She was one of the Landales—Lady Anne Landale—and she has improved wonderfully since she became Duchess of Rosecarn."

"That was not the lady I expected to see," said Sir Clinton, slowly.

Sir Gregory laughed.

"Whom did you think the duke had married, then?"

"I fancied I had heard that he was engaged to some one else, but I may have been mistaken."

He was beginning to speak slowly; it seemed to him that the life-blood was freezing in his veins—that his lips were growing stiff and would not move.

"I never heard that the duke was *engaged* to any one else. He was in love with Miss Stanhope, people said, and with Lady May Trevlyn; but he was never engaged to either of them."

Great drops stood on his forehead. He clutched the back of a chair, and leaned heavily upon it.

"I read it—I remember now," he said. "I read it in one of the papers that he was to marry—"

Then he stopped abruptly; not to have saved his life could he have uttered the name.

"That he was to marry Lady May Trevlyn," said Sir Gregory, coolly. "Yes, I remember reading that; but it was contradicted the next day."

"Then it was not true?" said Sir Clinton.

"True! How could it be true? Your wits have left you, Adair. How could it be true when he married Lady Anne? I know that he admired Lady Trevlyn very much, but she would have nothing to say to him."

"Why?" he asked, in a hoarse voice, quite unlike his own.

"I do not know," replied Sir Gregory, lightly. "People were kind enough to say it was because she liked some one else. What has come to you, Adair? What are you looking at? I believe you have left your sense, and reason, and wits all in France."

"This London world is new to me," he said.

Just then the Duke of Rosecarn saw him, and came across the room to greet him.

"You are an entire stranger, Sir Clinton," he said; "you have had time to travel over the world. You find a great many changes among us. Let me introduce you to the duchess."

And, before Sir Clinton could answer, he was bowing to a very lovely lady, with pink and white face, golden brown hair, and laughing eyes. How different to Lady May! He never remembered what he said to her, and the duchess must have thought him strange, for

when he came to a full consciousness of what was passing around him, she was asking him if he had been ill.

He never knew either how the night went on. People spoke to him, and he answered them; they greeted him, and he replied to their greeting; but one idea possessed, one thought engrossed him—after all, Lady May had not married his rival!

CHAPTER XXV.

“IF I LOST, HE HAS NOT WON.”

A BEAUTIFUL morning, and Sir Clinton Adair sat at his sumptuously appointed breakfast-table. A bright, warm, sunny morning, the world laughing under the lovely light of the sun. He had taken up the papers one after another, and in each of them found an announcement of his arrival.

“Sir Clinton Adair arrived from the Continent on the 23d.”

His coming home, therefore, would not long be a secret.

A curious feeling was on him; gradually he awoke to a new feeling of life; a new sensation, as of hope and ambition, stirred within him. It was such a busy world, a bright, busy, hopeful world; men all seemed intent on business or pleasure; there was action, energy, animation—how different from the life of stagnation he had been living at Leville. He shuddered as he thought of it.

“After all,” he said to himself, “men are born to be men, not hermits.”

He knew that he should never have gone through the hermit's stage of his existence but for the love and the sorrow that had driven him mad.

His return would be a matter of public gossip to-day, to-morrow forgotten; but one thing struck him, he must declare his marriage; no one here in England knew anything about it, and every moment in which the announcement was delayed it became more difficult. Why, he could not tell. Daisy was a lovely, lovable girl, devoted to him; she was graceful and accomplished, he had no need to feel ashamed of her; no one knew anything of her birth or connections, neither was there any need for them to know. He asked himself, over and over again, how it was that he disliked the idea of announcing it? Perhaps he feared that he would be teased for leaving this beautiful young wife far away; perhaps he disliked the idea of making himself the subject of conversation. Whatever it was, Sir Clinton thoroughly disliked the task.

“I will do it to-morrow,” he said; “a few hours' peace is all I ask.”

He looked through the “Fashionable Intelligence;” there was no news of Lady May. He longed to ask. He thought to himself that he would spend the morning at his club; there he should probably hear some news of her—she was one of those of whom men never weary in speaking. On his way there he met one or two old friends.

He would have given the whole world for strength to have asked one of them something of Lady May—to have thrown his head back, with a careless, jaunty air, and have asked:

"By the way, how is Lady May Trevlyn? Is she married yet?"

He even, in the solitude of his own room, tried how the words would sound; he said them aloud, blushing horribly at his own folly. Even there alone, with no eye to see him, no ear to hear him—even there he stammered over the words.

No, it was impossible; he gave up the idea—of no man or woman living could he ask the question, to no man or woman could he speak of his lost, dear love in cool, unconcerned tones. He must trust to chance; surely there at the club, where they discussed every one and everything, they would talk of Lady May.

He was profuse in his greetings, always hoping that in return for what he had said some one would speak of Lady May. It would have seemed as though there was a general conspiracy not to mention her name; no one even alluded to her. All the gossip of the day was freely and fully discussed—the Duchess of Rosecarn's ball, Lady Leeson's party, the dance at Lord Rushton's—but of the one subject of which he thirsted with his whole soul to hear there was not a sound.

He listened intently, hardly losing one word that was said on either side of him; he would fain have turned to them and cried:

"Tell me something of Lady May!"

He asked questions that he thought would lead to the subject, but they failed. So far as learning one word of his beautiful, lost love was concerned, the whole morning was a failure. He could not help feeling touched by the warm welcome given to him everywhere—he was literally inconvenienced with invitations.

Where had he been? What had he been doing? Where had he hidden himself?

His hand was grasped in friendship a hundred times; one pressed him to dine, another begged for the evening. In short, Sir Clinton Adair was half bewildered by the warm welcome extended to him.

"And this is the world I flew from," he thought to himself; "these are the friends I left in disgust, simply because a woman's folly had driven me mad."

He lunched with Colonel Dempster, and as they sat at the table he tried hard to introduce the name of Lady May. The gallant colonel talked of all the belles and beauties, but never mentioned her.

"It must be," thought Sir Clinton, "that she has married and gone abroad. I can not account for it in any other way."

He rode out after lunch, and accepted an invitation to dine at Lord Merloch's.

"Just a quiet bachelor party," said his lordship. "I like a bachelor's dinner myself. You can say what you like, and you are not compelled to waste the best part of your time in attending on ladies."

At a bachelor's dinner there was some hope; as a rule, ladies were pretty freely discussed on such occasions. Surely they would, among others, mention the Lady May.

The dinner was a gay one; piquant little bits of scandal were daintily discussed, a reputation went with each glass of wine, the principal divorce cases of the day were freely talked of, probable divorce cases were canvassed, broken engagements plainly com-

mented upon; in fact, the discussion was eminently pleasant, and each gentleman retired much edified by it.

Yet he never heard the name of Lady May. So, when the dinner was over and the laugh caused by the last repartee had died away, when the guests had all departed, Sir Clinton said to himself that he would just walk round by Cliffe House and see if anything was to be discovered of Lady May.

He lighted his cigar and went. Cliffe House was all in darkness. How his heart beat as he looked at the familiar windows, the door, the pretty balconies. Was she there, his fair, lost love?

He stood for some time opposite the house, then he walked up and down the pavement, then he flung his cigar away with a low cry.

"Great Heaven!" he said, "what a dupe I am. Have I forgotten that I am a married man—a married man—and the dearest little wife in all the world is waiting for me away among the vines and olives? Am I so weak or so mad that even the air of this place drives me mad again? I will go home and write to Daisy."

He walked down the broad, beautiful road; carriages containing beautifully dressed and richly jeweled women flashed past him; the night was odorous, wet with dew, sweet with the breath of flowers, fragrant with the perfume of the young green leaves; a thousand stars shone in the sky—sweet, pure eyes that looked down on him with their holy light, and seemed to stop the mad fever thrilling in his veins.

He would go home and write to Daisy—sweet, winsome Daisy, who had loved him so dearly. What need even to waste a thought on false Lady May? A whole world lay between them now. Even if he were to meet her face to face it would not be worth his while to stop and address her; she was nothing to him now. Yet—and his heart beat with a great throb of passionate delight—yet she had not married the Duke of Rosecarn after all.

"I am glad that I came to England," he said, "if it be only for the sake of knowing that; not, of course, that it matters in the least to me, not the least, but I am pleased to know it; if I lost, he has not won."

So he would go home and write to Daisy. He wondered, just a little, if she had gone to the opera—Lady May he meant—there would be no harm in looking round. He went in; he looked round the boxes, where he saw some of the loveliest faces in England, but no Lady May.

"I should like to see her just for once," he thought, his mood changed by continual disappointment. "The desire to see her has been like a thirst; one look at her might quench it. I should like to see her just for once."

If he were to meet her, he said to himself, he would look coldly in her face and pass her without word or sign; or, better still, he would stop, hold out his hand in greeting to her, speak coldly, quietly, and, after some few minutes, introduce his wife's name. That would pique her most; women never like to know that they have lost power; they never like to know that a victim has escaped them. And he said to himself, with a light, bitter, mocking laugh: "She shall see how completely I have escaped from her."

He went home at last to write to Daisy. Sir Clinton Adair's

town house was a very beautiful one; it was called Litdale House, as it had once been inhabited by the earl of that name. As soon as his engagement to Lady May had become a certainty, he purchased Litdale House and fitted it up most magnificently; he had lavished a small fortune on it; even then it did not seem to him good enough for his fair young love. He entered his magnificent house with a feeling of desolation not to be expressed in words.

Of course there was every comfort, every luxury—Sir Clinton cared for none of it. There was an iced claret cup prepared for him; he moved it impatiently away; he did not care for it; he was saying to himself that if he had only heard her name, he should have been contented.

He went into his own study, the room that he had intended, even when married, to use entirely for himself; here it would be easy to write to Daisy—there was nothing to distract his thoughts.

“I shall not want anything, Adolphe,” he said; “it is not late, not ten o’clock; how long the hours are. I will ring when I require you; I have some letters to write.”

At last he was seated at the writing-table, before him a fair, white sheet of paper, pens, and ink. He must tell Daisy that he had arrived safely, and, of course, add a few words to say how much he had missed her—that would only be simple kindness; he would finish his cigar before he began. How long had letter-writing been so great a nuisance to him? He lay back in his chair, musing again; how strange that no one spoke of her, that of all the parties and balls discussed there was no mention made of her. He had heard of no particular marriages, no one seemed to be missing from the circles; could it be that she had not been to London for the season at all and so had faded from the fickle mind of the fickle world?

He dipped his pen in the ink, sighing to himself, trying to recall his scattered thoughts, saying to himself that he had to write to Daisy. Surely the spirit of unrest was on him; he had written so far as “My dear Daisy,” when he was dreaming again.

Sir Clinton rose from his chair.

“This will not do,” he said; “I have no excuse for such folly. I declare before Heaven that I am ashamed of myself. I have been—how many hours in London? and yet during that time I have thought of no single thing except Lady May. This will not do. I had better go back to France again.”

But it was useless attempting to write. Sir Clinton Adair went abruptly out of his study; he must write on the morrow; he would go to the drawing-room and nod.

He went, hating himself for his weakness and folly, yet unable to conquer them.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A PROUD WOMAN HUMBLLED.

THE lamps were not all lighted in that beautiful room. It was a room that would have charmed an artist; no gaudy coloring, no vulgar gilding, no inartistic mass of colors. So far as a room could

be a poem, this was one. It was almost all white—white silk, white lace, intermixed with a pale shade of amber. There were few pictures, but they were of the best. The chief charm of the room was, perhaps, its profusion of flowers—they were everywhere, great stands of white hyacinths, vases filled with rich gladiolus, heliotrope, and verbenas; it was a grateful paradise of perfume.

One of the lamps was lighted, and filled the large room with a soft, pearly light through which the flowers gleamed palely. Two of the windows were opened, and one saw the tall, green trees, stretching far and wide, the blue sky, with its golden stars.

Sir Clinton drew an easy-chair to the open window, and sat down to think; those pale, golden stars said much to him. How long he had been there he did not know, when his valet, Adolphe, entered the room.

"Sir Clinton," he said, "there is a lady who wishes to see you."

"A lady!" he said, rather startled by the intelligence; "at this hour?"

"It is only just ten, sir," said Adolphe, "and the lady wishes me to say that she has come from some distance, and her business is imperative."

"There must be a mistake," he said, composedly. "I know no lady who would come from a distance; I know no business that is imperative. Does she give no name, Adolphe?"

"No, Sir Clinton, she would not give name or card."

"Do you know her?" he asked again. "Have you seen her before?"

"I can not tell, Sir Clinton. She wears a thick veil, and speaks in a strange, muffled voice. I can not tell whether I have seen her or not."

Sir Clinton looked, as he felt, annoyed.

"There is no peace in London," he said. "Some absurd subscription for a bazaar, or some nonsense of the kind. I suppose I must see her."

"I think so, Sir Clinton," was the deliberate answer; "she seems like one who will not go until she has seen you."

"A duchess masquerading, or a countess in search of recruits for a ball," said Sir Clinton to himself.

Adolphe stood respectfully waiting, yet eying his master with keen curiosity.

"Show her in," said Sir Clinton, abruptly. "Another time say I am not in—I am in no humor for follies."

Adolphe bowed—he would have bowed just the same had Sir Clinton refused to see her; he was one of those well-trained servants who have eyes, yet do not see—ears, yet never hear—sense and reason, yet never apply them to the affairs of their masters. He was not gone very long; when he returned he ushered in a tall, slender, black figure. He did not linger, as some servants would have done, full of curiosity, under the pretense of arranging a blind or a chair. He bowed and quitted the room, closing the door after him.

Sir Clinton rose, and bowed somewhat stiffly.

"I beg your pardon," he said; "I really am quite at a loss to know—"

Then he paused; there was something familiar to him in that tall, slender figure—true, it was draped in a large traveling-cloak, and a thick veil covered the face—an indefinable something that caused his heart to beat and his pulse to thrill. He went one step nearer to her, then fell back in his chair.

"I am frightened," he said, holding up his hand. "I am sore afraid."

The next moment she was kneeling at his feet; fair, white arms clasped round his arm; a lovely, fair young face was gazing with passionate joy into his.

"Clinton, Clinton! do you not know me?" she cried. "Speak to me, dear. I have been praying and waiting for months and years to see you again. I have been praying, and waiting, and longing! Where have you been, love—where have you been?"

Tears were fast falling from the beautiful eyes; the sweet lips that he remembered as so scornful and so grand, were quivering; the lovely face that he had never touched, save once, was near his, and the white, tender arms round him. Was he mad? Was it a dream? Was he asleep?

"May!" he said, wonderingly. "Lady—Lady May!"

"Nay," she said, "not Lady May, but your own May—the May who found out when you had gone from her that her whole life was bound in yours; the May who has longed for your return as the flowers long for dew. Oh, my love, I thought I had lost you."

She laid her fair, flower-like face on his hands and kissed them. He thought himself still in a dream. She tightened the clasp of her white arms round his, and he thought he was dreaming still. The dark traveling-cloak fell to the floor, and he saw the graceful, slender figure. She had thrown the hat and veil aside; he saw the golden head and beautiful face; he thought still that he was in a dream. His head whirls, his brain burns, his heart beats. Remember how he had loved her, how he had worshiped her, and she was here, kneeling at his feet, clasping his hands, kissing them with her beautiful lips, she who had been his idol.

"You will never call me proud or cold again?" she says. "Oh, Clinton, how could you go away, and stay away so long? Oh, love, how could you leave me? You must have known that I should be sorry. I own frankly that I was quite in the wrong. I ought never to have acted in that wretched play. I did not enjoy it, believe me, Clinton, not in the least. I was miserable all the time, thinking of you, love, thinking of you."

Again she kisses the hands so tightly clasped in her own, and again he makes no answer—he is so stunned, too bewildered for that.

"If you had not been quite so angry, love, I should have told you some evening how sorry I was; but you scolded me, and I am proud. I have been spoiled by too much flattery, but I never thought you would leave me, love—never."

He is beginning to recover now, and he says, in a trembling voice:

"Is it you, really you, May?"

"Yes, really; and, Clinton, I made up my mind that, let you remain away as long as you would, I would wait for you, and I come here and kneel by you until you promise to forgive me."

He makes no answer; if it were to save his life he could not speak one word. She does not seem to require it.

"I have been so unhappy," she said, simply. "Miss Lockwood said I deserved to be, and I have been. I do not think I have ever enjoyed one single moment since that night. Sir Clinton, my love, my love! I have come to humble myself before you, to lay all my pride at your feet, to beg of you to forgive me, and to love me a little bit."

She looked so beautiful, so bewitching in her sweet, shy fondness, her contrition, her smiles, and her tears, that he grew more and more bewildered. He is lost—hopelessly lost.

"I promise you," she said, "that if you will forgive me, I will be as humble as hitherto I have been proud; I will be submissive to every wish of yours—obedient as a child. You will forgive me, love, will you not?"

She looked up at him then, and the lovely eyes were full of passion, and love, and tenderness; they wore just such a look as once, in his wildest dreams, he had hoped to win from her; and they were such glorious eyes, so large, so liquid, so bright, he was himself again for one half minute, as he gazed in their beautiful depths. Then, speaking slowly, as though he were barely conscious of his words, he says:

"Then you are not married, May?"

"Married!" she repeated, with a little laugh, her eyes gleaming through her tears. "How could I be married while you were away? I may have been naughty and saucy, cold and proud, but it never entered my mind to marry any one but you, Clinton—never!"

"I thought you were married to the Duke of Rosecarn. I am sure that I saw something about it in the paper—an announcement of it."

"You must also have seen the contradiction," she said. "I was very angry about it. I marry the Duke of Rosecarn! Not I, were he fifty times a duke. I never thought of marrying any one but you, Clinton."

"I never read the contradiction," he said.

"And you stayed away because you thought I had married the duke? Shame on you, Clinton! You told me once that women played at love; you see now how false it is. You, on a mere newspaper report, believed me married, and I have been all the time as true to you as the stars to their course. Which of us has played at love, you or I?"

He did not answer her, for he could scarcely yet realize the bewildering bliss of her presence, the reality of her sweet, shy caresses, her loving, tender words. He ventured to touch her hand; it was more to see if it were real than anything else. She glanced up at him shyly.

"I was cold to you, proud, and hard, and unkind—nay, I was cruel; but I was only a foolish girl, and I liked to exercise my power over you—I think I gloried in it—and my coldness, my pride has made you so much afraid of me that you dare hardly touch my hand. Oh, Clinton, Clinton, my love, whom I wounded so cruelly,

bend your head—stoop down, love, and kiss my lips—the lips that should have burned with the cruel words they said to you!”

He could not refuse; no thought of refusal came to him; he was simply lost and bewildered, afraid lest he should wake and find it all a dream. For the second time in his life his lips touched hers, and then all the passionate love of his heart seemed to waken and burst into passionate flame.

“My darling, my darling!” he cried, holding the blushing, flower-like face between his hands, drinking in its loveliness as a man dying of thirst drinks water. “My darling!” he repeated, for he seemed to have lost the power of using words freely.

She smiled through her tears.

“Now I am content,” she says. “You seemed so strange at first that I felt afraid you would not be friendly; but you are my friend, my love, are you not?”

For answer he kisses the red, sweet mouth, the white forehead, the lovely cheeks, the golden hair, the white hands—kisses them as a dying mother kisses her only child.

“The idea,” she continues, in a low, sweet tone, “of you even thinking that I would marry the duke! You will laugh at me, Clinton, without doubt, but do you remember the evening you first kissed me, after I had promised to marry you?”

“I remember,” he said.

“Well, that kiss I considered as you did, that it was our betrothal. You thought the Duke of Rosecarn kissed me in the play; he never did—it was only pretense; he dared not. And listen, love, listen—you have been away a long time, yet you may take the kiss from my lips you laid on them then. They have never been touched since by man, woman, or child; I have kept them, love, for you.”

What can he do but bend down again and do what she bids him, take the kiss back again. Then he remembers that she is kneeling, and he says:

“May, my darling, let me find you a chair.”

But she flashes a laughing glance at him.

“No,” she says. “I have been a naughty child, and I shall remain here until I am forgiven.”

“You are forgiven,” he replied.

“Quite?” asks Lady May.

And his answer is not put in words.

He has quite forgotten Daisy. Heaven help and pity him! Forgotten his marriage, forgotten Daisy—everything except his beautiful, bewildering love.

CHAPTER XXVII.

TOO LATE.

“I HAVE won my pardon hardly,” she said, in a laughing voice. “I should suppose the laws of decorum are quite set aside by this visit; but Miss Lockwood knows about it—I told her, and she said that, under the circumstances, it would not be wrong.”

“It could not be wrong,” said Sir Clinton.

“Some might say that I could have written. So I might, but so

many accidents happen to letters—some are lost, some delayed; besides, a letter could not say so much as I can myself. I read of your arrival this morning in the 'Court Gazette'—we are staying at Trevlyn Nest just now—and the moment I read it I cried out to Miss Lockwood, 'He is come! he is come!' She was pleased, too—she always loved you. What do you think I did, Clinton?—I, whom the world calls proud, cold Lady May?"

"I can not tell," he answered, looking at the beautiful face, still bewildered beyond the power of thought.

"I—the cold, proud Lady May, the haughty girl who sent you away—I took that paper in my hands, Clinton, and I kissed every letter in your name."

She laughed a little, low, triumphant laugh.

"Does not that show," she said, "how much I love you? Then I said to Miss Lockwood that I would wait no longer—that I had waited months and years—but that I should come to London at once and see you. She came with me; she has driven to Cliffe House, and I came here. She said it would only take a few words to make all right again, and those few words she advised me to speak myself. You see, Clinton, it is quite safe; your servants will never dream of me, and I shall go back to Cliffe House without any one suspecting me. I never knew how much safety there was in a thick veil before."

"I knew you," he said, slowly.

"Ah, yes—you, because you love me, and 'love has eyes;' but no one else would."

Then she passed her hand over his brow and his hair.

"How thin you are, Clinton," she said, "and your face has so many lines on it. It will be the work of my life to drive those lines away. How you have altered! you look as though you have been through years of pain."

"So I have," he said, in a low, soft voice; "such years of pain! Oh! May, when I lost you I went mad; death would have been more merciful than the pain I suffered."

"It is all over now, dear," she said, caressingly; "I shall spend my life in trying to make you forget all about it; and after this, after to-night, we will never allude to it again. It shall be all forgotten and forgiven. You will never laugh at woman's love again, Clinton, shall you? See how true, and how strong, and how tender it is!"

"Never again, May," he replied, with a sigh that was almost a sob; "never again."

She drew her cloak from the floor with a little, low laugh of perfect happiness.

"Miss Lockwood said once that perhaps you would never forgive me. I told her that you would never refuse. Why, that night when you were so angry with me, if I had held out my hand again you would have stayed."

"Yes, I would have stayed."

"But, perhaps, after all, it may be for the best; if it had not been for this quarrel, and the sorrow, the pain of being parted from you, I should have always been proud and cold; it has taught me

such a lesson," she continued, humbly, "I shall make your love and your happiness the study of my life."

He has been wrapped in a dream so beautiful, so delicious, that he hardly knows even when she rises, for she has been kneeling all this time.

"I must go," she said. "I shall not let you take me home, Clinton, because I do not wish any one to know where I have been; but to-morrow you will like to come to Cliffe House—come as early as you please, stay as long as you like. I have so much to say to you that it seems to me that my life will not be long enough to say it in."

Then she went up to him, a clear light in her eyes, a humorous smile on her lips, a pure, sweet, tender soul reflected in her charming face. Once more she raised her white, fair arms, and laid them on his neck.

"My love," she said, very gravely and quietly, "you have pardoned me, but I shall never pardon myself. What in the hour of my caprice and folly I refused you, I give you now—my whole heart, my whole love, my whole truth, my whole life; and when you ask me to be your wife I shall say 'yes!'"

He had forgotten his miserable marriage, forgotten Daisy, forgotten everything but his sweet and fair young love, who was humbling herself so sweetly to him. At the word "wife" he woke up to a sudden, swift, keen sense of the truth.

Great Heaven! how dare he to stand with those pure arms around his neck, that tender face raised to his—he, who was a married man. In the swiftness of lightning he saw it all. Her love, the crown of his life, her sweet repentance, her tenderness, had all come too late—too late!

He drew back from her with a terrible cry; a livid hue came over his face, his lips turned white as the lips of a dead man, but even as he drew back she followed him.

"What is it, love, what is it?" she asked.

He tried, Heaven help him, he tried to speak; he tried to say to her, "I am married," but the cold, white lips were dumb, he could frame no word with them.

She placed her soft, warm hand on his brow.

"Why, Clinton," she said, "you are ill, I am quite sure—What is it?"

He tried again to say to her, "I am married," but he could not. Looking at her in her fair young beauty, so happy, so loving, with that glad light in her eyes, and that glad smile on her lips, he could not slay her with the words. He could far rather have taken a hot iron and scarred her beautiful face—it would have been easier to have taken a dagger and plunged it into her white breast than have said those words to her just then.

"Oh, madman that I have been!" he thought; but she was still looking at him with tender, loving pity.

He recovered himself by a terrible effort.

"Are you ill, Clinton?" she asked, anxiously.

"Only a spasm," he said; "a spasm at the heart."

"But that is very dangerous. You must see a doctor; I shall

insist upon it. I can not afford to lose you now that I have found you."

He looked at her.

"Would you grieve so very much if you lost me now, May?" he said.

She shook her charming head.

"My answer will make you vain, I know," she replied. "Yes. I am not exaggerating, Clinton—I think that I should die if I lost you again, or, if I did not die, I should never have another moment of happiness while I lived; that would almost be worse than death to me, for I love happiness."

"If I had died abroad," he said, "what then?"

"Ah, then, dear, I must have submitted. It would have been Heaven's will; but I should never have married, Clinton. If I had lost you in this world, I should have lived in the hope of finding you in the next. But I have not lost you, love."

"Suppose—only suppose, May—that in the interval I had forgotten you—loved some one else?"

"I can not fancy anything of the kind," she said, laughingly. "Better ask me to imagine that the stars fall, the sun refuses to shine, the tide to flow. I could not imagine such a thing even if I tried."

"But I have been long away," he said.

"That may be. Had you been twice as long it would not have mattered. You can not shake my faith in you, Clinton, jest as you will."

He could not disturb her sweet faith, her entire and perfect trust. She held out both her hands to him.

"Good-night," she said, with her charming smile. "You have been very good to me, Clinton. Am I to go home and tell Miss Lockwood that you have quite forgiven me?"

"You may tell Miss Lockwood that I say you are an angel," he replied. "May, let me go with you. I can not let you go alone."

"But I want to keep my visit a secret."

"So it shall be, dear. You have got a cab at the door, I suppose."

"Yes," she replied. "I drove straight from the station here. Very undignified haste, was it not?"

He thought to himself it would be easier to tell her in a cab, where he could not see the white anguish that would come over her face—easier than to tell her as she stood there.

"Let me take you home," he said. "As you wish your visit to me to remain a secret, I will not get out of the cab. I will see you safely in the house, and then drive back home again."

"I will not say no," she replied. "Ah, Clinton," laughing softly, and clasping her hands, "I shall be much pleased, dear, and I should have been disappointed had you not offered to go. See how frank I am growing."

So they drove away in the cab together, and the wind that came into the window was sweet, dewy, and perfumed. She looked more beautiful than ever in the starlight.

"Now I must tell her," he said; "stab my darling right through her tender, loving heart."

He did begin, in a grave tone.

"May," but she interrupted him. She held up a little white hand before him, on which shone a golden ring.

"Do you remember that?" she asked.

He held the sweet white hand in his, while he looked at it.

"It is the one I gave you," he said.

"Yes; and I know you have been true to me, because the stone has not changed its color. Miss Lockwood always said there was hope of me, because I loved my ring."

How was he to tell her? In what words?

"May," he began again, in a grave, tender voice.

"Clinton," she interrupted, "do you know that the sound of your voice has altered—changed completely? It has lost all its ring, just as your eyes have lost all their happy laughter; but it will soon come back."

"I must tell her," he thought. "Heaven help me, I must tell her! Oh, fool and madman that I was!"

She was sitting beside him now; her warm, sweet breath reached his cheek. By the light of the stars he saw that her eyes were wet with happy tears.

"What are those lines, Clinton?" she asked. "I like them so much. Listen, do I say them correctly:

"After long years of sorrow and pain,
The arms of my true love are round me again."

"Yes," he said, "that is right."

"One never feels the truth and beauty of poetry until one has loved and suffered," said Lady May; "but the suffering is all over for us, Clinton—only the love remains."

"May," he began a third time, and the cab stopped.

"We are at Cliffe House," she said; "I am disposed to think we have come by steam."

"I must tell her to-morrow," he thought to himself. "My darling, she will have one night of happiness. I could not have borne to have killed all her innocent joy so soon. To-morrow—I will tell her to-morrow. Oh, dreary day!"

She was holding out her hand to him with a sweet smile on her lovely face.

"Good-night, my love, good-night," she said.

And he never knew what he answered. Then he was alone in the starlight—alone with his sorrow and despair.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HOW HE LOVED HER.

WHEN the door of Cliffe House closed behind him, and he was alone, Sir Clinton Adair dismissed the cab. He was suffocated; he could not breathe; the small vehicle seemed to him like a furnace; he longed to be where the free, fresh air could circle round him and cool the fever of his heart and brain.

"I ought to have told her the first moment," he said to himself;

"the instant she entered the room I ought to have told her I was married. It will be a thousand times more difficult now."

He walked quickly through the deserted squares, where the summer wind gently stirred the sleepy trees. He could not collect his thoughts; he could not realize what had passed.

Lady May, his proud, fair young love, had been with him—Lady May, whom he had worshiped as men of old worshiped the sun and the stars—Lady May, who would never relax her dignity, who would never lay aside her pride, who had been so coy, so shy, so reserved, that he feared often she did not love him. She had been with him, her fair arms clasped round his neck; she had knelt at his feet; she had lifted up her pure, fair face to kiss him—his hands burned where those sweet lips had touched them; and she had talked to him so frankly of her love—how she loved him, how she had waited for him, how she had kept her heart and her love untouched for him; how, if he had died, she would never have married, but would have lived all alone for his sake.

Could it be possible that she loved him so well?

The lovely, half-drowned eyes raised to his, the sweet lips half trembling, half smiling; he could think of nothing else—the touch of these little white hands was with him still. How fair, how pure, and how tender was this sweet young love of his; she had never been more bewitching than in her pretty penitence and pretty tears. He had thought it most probable that she had married; instead of that, she had been waiting for him—keeping her love and her heart for him. He had thought that he might not see her again. She had been living only to see him. He had thought that if he met her he could pass her by with a cold, careless glance, or gay, careless words; instead of that, his darling had been kneeling at his feet, speaking tender words to him, caressing him after her own pure, sweet fashion.

How he had misjudged her! Why, all her pride and her coldness had given way before her love. If she were proud, then he knew not what pride meant. Who so sweet, so gracious, so loving, so kind? How wrongly he had judged her!

Was it a dream, or a reality? How many long months had he spent in dreary despair, never caring for the sun to rise or set, weary of his life, caring for nothing, because he had lost Lady May; and all this time she was longing for him with a love as great as his own. Was it a dream? Should he wake up presently and find himself among the vines at Leville? Was it possible that all his anguish and misery had been for nothing? Heaven bless her! how beautiful she was; there was no other woman like her in the wide world—none! Heaven bless her! she had grown fairer and sweeter.

What a madman he had been! If only on the evening of that fatal play he had been more patient. She was so young, so beautiful, so admired, no wonder she was impatient of control. Every one flattered her, indulged her, spoiled her; no wonder that she disliked his scolding and imperative manner. If he had been less jealous, less angry—if he had only gone on the morning afterward and asked her to forget his jealousy. After all, he had so little cause for it; she had cared nothing for the Duke of Rosecarn; why could not he, Sir Clinton, have been more indulgent? What real harm

was there, after all, in the private theatricals? Not one quarter so much as there was in his own jealousy, with its terrible consequences. How worse than foolish he had been to let such trifles anger him so deeply. He hated himself with a fierce hatred when he thought of what he had done. The climax to his folly had been his marriage with Daisy—the marriage contracted without love, simply from pity, because a pretty girl said she was dying over him. How foolish it had all been, to marry her, when he cared nothing for her, when his whole heart, mind, and soul were given to another. “I have put the climax to my folly,” he thought, “in coming back again; yet my return has disclosed the truth about her—I know that she really loved me.”

All would be well with him, would be right, but for this most foolish marriage of his. Poor, pretty Daisy! at the best he had only felt a kindly affection for her, a toleration born of her kindness and love for him. Now that she was the obstacle, the barrier between himself and his love, he felt something more akin to dislike to her. Poor, pretty, simple Daisy! Alas! why had she chosen to fall in love with him, and why had he been so mad as to marry her.

He looked at the sleepy trees, they gave him no counsel; he looked at the pale, pure stars, they said much to him—they said he must do his duty, come what might, and, without loss of time, he must tell Lady May that he was married. What would she think of it? He shuddered with terrible pain, his heart grew sick and faint within him; yet he knew that, above all, she would resent the fact that he had not told her at once—that he had allowed her to open her heart to him, knowing all the time that he was a married man; she would resent that fact more bitterly than the fact of his marriage.

How could he tell her? He pictured her as he should see her, with all her love shining in her face, sweetest welcome shining in her eyes, her white hands outstretched in kindest greeting—tall, fair, slender, like a white lily-bud. She would use kind words to him, and there, he standing before her, must tell her that he was married, must dash the sunlight and happiness from her, must see the love and the joy frozen in her sweet eyes, the smile die on her lips; he must slay her more cruelly than Jephtha slew his daughter; he must plunge the sharpest sword in her pure, loving heart.

As he stood there, looking up at the quiet stars, he could have cursed his fate; still, he never dreamed of hiding the fact from her. He called himself a coward, a traitor, that he had not told her at once. The first moment she came near him he ought to have said to her, “I am married.” Better to have told all at first.

It was of no use staying out there watching the stars; they had given their counsel, they had told him what to do. He re-entered the house; he went straight to the drawing-room, where their interview had taken place, just to convince himself that it had been real, and not a dream. There was the lamp, with its pearly light, the chair whereon he had sat, the flowers, everything just as he left it. He kissed the chair where her white hand had rested. How he loved her—great Heaven, how he loved her!

A sudden idea occurred to him—he would write to her; that would be by far the easiest way of telling her. He went back to his

study. There on the desk lay the letter beginning, "My dear Daisy." Was he ever to finish that? He felt unequal just at that moment to ever writing to Daisy again. Then he took himself to task—Daisy was his wife, the woman who had loved him when all other love seemed to fail him.

He forced himself to write; he added only a few lines, telling her he had arrived in England safe and well, hoping she was well, and not lonely. She must be sure to let him know if she were dull, and he signed the letter "from your affectionate husband." He folded, sealed, and directed it. That duly done, it would be so much easier to write to Lady May. He tried it—how cold the words looked on paper. What was he to say?

"My darling May—I did not tell you that I was married." No, that was too abrupt.

"Dear Lady May—I have to announce to you the news of my marriage." No, that was too cold, too sudden; he must prepare her just a little—his golden-haired love.

"Dearest Lady May—When I left you on that fatal evening." No, that did not please him. After all, should he write? She would be so grieved, so unhappy; she might cry out suddenly; she might even faint—no one could tell what would happen. Then she would blame him for his abruptness. Better, perhaps, not to write it, but gradually to break the news to her.

Gradually—not startle her with an abrupt declaration, but tell her what had happened, all about his illness, and his accident. She had plenty of sense, this lovely Lady May; she would understand.

So he put away paper and pen, giving up all idea of writing. As soon as it was possible to call, he would go to Cliffe House, and, wandering through the pretty, perfumed conservatories, as he had often done before, he would gradually break it to her.

Having resolved upon a certain plan of action, he felt more relieved; but it would be a terrible task. She was so proud, so sensitive; there could not possibly be a greater humiliation for her than to know that she had given her love, her sweet, shy words, her sweet, shy caresses, to a married man. Even as he said the words to himself, his face flushed with keen, sharp indignation. If he felt it, what would she do—she, who had been so sure of his faith, so secure in his truth, his fidelity, his love? Of what avail to tell her that his love had never wandered from her? So much the worse—so much the more perjured he!

He tried to sleep, but all night he was haunted by the memory of her beautiful face, and he awoke thinking to himself how different all would have been had he never married Daisy; that was the one fatal blot on his life, the one misfortune for which there was no remedy.

He rose with the dawn—sleep was impossible; he went out again through the leafy shade of the park; he listened to the singing birds, he looked at the dew-laden flowers; he raised his eyes to the kindly summer heavens. Alas! there was no help for him, look where and how he would—no help!

He was restless and miserable.

"I think," he said to himself, "that no man ever had so ungracious a task before; I would rather kill myself than have to meet the

sorrowful eyes of Lady May—than see her face flush with wounded love and wounded pride. I can not bear it.”

It was some little relief to him when the dreary breakfast-hour had ended, and he could start for Cliffe House.

“It will be my last visit there,” he thought. “I shall never again dare to see Lady May.”

His last visit! Even if she did not send him from her with cold, proud words, he could never go again. The shadow of his unloved wife lay between him and his true love.

He was impatient, irritable, hard to please. Adolphe secretly wondered what ailed his master.

“Going abroad has not improved his temper,” thought that valuable man; “he never used to find fault in this way—never.”

At last he started for Cliffe House. It might have been better for him that morning had he prayed the grand old prayer, “Lead us not into temptation”—he was going into the very midst of it. There was a smile on the face of the old servitor who opened the door to him. Sir Clinton stopped to say a few kindly words to him, and, as he passed on through the entrance hall, the old man said to himself:

“I hope it will be all right at last.”

For Lady May’s love was pretty well known among the members of her household; they judged she liked Sir Clinton best, because she had cared for no one after he was gone, and because she had evidently waited for his return, so that Sir Clinton Adair saw nothing but smiling faces on his return to Cliffe House.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A PLAIN QUESTION.

THERE was no one in the drawing-room when he entered. His heart beat fast as he saw once more the familiar, well-loved room. How often he had sat there with her—they had laughed, sung, quarreled, all in that room; but now, what was to happen in it?

“Heaven help me!” he said to himself; “how will it end?” But the keenest fancies of imagination given to him never foreshadowed such an ending as that which came.

The door opened suddenly, and Miss Lockwood came in with outstretched hands that trembled in the very eagerness of their welcome, with eyes filled with glad tears.

“I can not find words,” she said, “in which to welcome you. Thank Heaven you have come back to us! You have been sorely, sadly missed.”

She took both his hands in hers.

“Why did you stay away so long?” she asked.

There was his chance. He should have answered:

“I have been married, Miss Lockwood;” but a foolish fear restrained him. He ought surely, first of all, to tell Lady May; that was surely the least he could do; he had no right to mention it to any one until she knew. That was the excuse which he made to himself.

"Why have you stayed away so long?" she said, half sadly. "How much happiness you have missed!"

"I had not much when I went," he replied, with a faint smile.

"No, but then she is altered; you have never seen any one so altered, Sir Clinton. I shall always think that this sorrow has done her good. There is no mistake about one thing—she loved you all the time, and she loved you well."

"I have only myself to blame," he replied.

"If you knew how anxious she has been over you! We tried all that was possible to make out your address, but we could not. When the announcement of your arrival appeared in the papers yesterday, I thought my darling would have gone crazy with delight. I would not tell you this but that I know you love her, and I know that it is all right."

He bit his lips with vexation. Would to Heaven that it were indeed all right! He could have given his life for his freedom, if only for one hour in which he might have loved her and called her his own.

"I was half startled," continued Miss Lockwood, "when she insisted on coming to London to see you. I was half unwilling, just at first; but she said a letter might be lost, besides which, the longest letter that she could write would never tell you how sorry she was, nor how dearly she loved you. Then I thought it could not matter, and we came up together. But what a gossip I am! Where have you been all this time, Sir Clinton?"

"I have been living in France," he said, briefly; and it struck Miss Lockwood, even then, that he did not care to say much of his absence.

"In France?" she repeated. "Well, time teaches us many lessons, Sir Clinton; it will teach you never to be jealous again."

"I was a madman!" he cried, suddenly. "She has the purest, the noblest, the truest heart in all the world. I am not worthy to breathe the same air."

"That is what all lovers think," said Miss Lockwood.

Then, before he had time to say more, the door opened, and Lady May entered, bright and fair as the morning itself, a heaven of welcome in her face, her eyes shining with light.

"Good-morning, Sir Clinton," she said, gayly; "you are an early visitor."

"I have much to say," he replied, bowing over the white, warm hands.

She looked up into his face.

"You must grant us a favor," she said. "We are going to kill the fattened calf for you to-day; will you spend the whole day with us?"

"Yes," he replied.

He thought to himself that every condemned criminal had a last request granted to him; surely there could be no harm in his snatching this one gleam of happiness before he died.

"I will stay gladly," he replied.

Then he saw that Miss Lockwood had quitted the room. A sudden, almost terrible nervousness came over him—he, who loved her so, felt almost afraid of Lady May. After her great kindness to

him, she would expect, at least, some kind words from him. What could he—what dare he say?

She did not give him much time for reflection; she looked at him with laughing eyes.

“Clinton, have you seen the Duchess of Rosecarn yet?” she asked. “See, I have cards for her ball next week. I shall go, if you will go; and I promise not to waltz once.”

He looked up in surprise.

“But they”—then he hesitated—“are they friends of yours, May?” he asked.

“Yes,” she replied. “I have achieved the wonder some people think impossible—I have dismissed a man as a lover, yet retained him as a friend. The duke and myself are on friendly terms, and his pretty wife does me the favor to call me one of her best friends. They were very anxious that I should come up to town three weeks ago, but I did not.”

“Why?” he asked, yielding himself to the luxury of listening to the sweet tones of her voice—all the music would be taken from it soon, when she should hear what he had to say.

“Why?” she repeated, laughingly; “I will tell you, if you promise not to be vain.”

“I promise,” he said.

“I did not care to come because you were not here; and it has been my dream that I should be able to tell you, when you came back, that I had given up every attraction London held for your sake.”

“And you have done so?” he asked, dreamily.

“Yes,” she replied; “and I would do it again and again. I wonder at myself; but when you had gone, it was just as though the very light had gone out of my life—I never enjoyed one minute afterward. Now it is all over, thank Heaven, and light has come in the place of darkness.”

“I will tell her all in a few minutes,” he thought—“not just now, while she looks so radiantly happy.”

“Clinton,” she said, with a low, happy laugh, “you would have been touched had you seen Miss Lockwood last evening. She was waiting for me; she stood by the table there, trembling so that she could hardly talk to me.

“‘Oh, my dear, my dear!’ she cried, as soon as I entered; ‘now, is it all right—has he made friends with you? Do tell me, I am so anxious to know.’”

“I laughed at her.

“‘Friends? Certainly, we are the greatest of friends,’ I replied; and she thanked Heaven with tears in her eyes. She loves you, Clinton. You are very fortunate; Miss Lockwood does not love many people in this weary world.”

“I am fortunate, but I do not deserve my good fortune,” he said, gravely.

“I think you do; a man’s estimate of himself is never to be taken for truth. I can judge of you better than you can judge of yourself.”

“Ah, if she knew!” he said to himself—“if she only knew!”

He knew that he was cowardly in deferring his task; it had to be

done—it must be done. Up to this time he had no thought of concealing the truth, never even the faintest idea of such a thing; but now—well, it was only for a few minutes; a reprieve such as a condemned man has in his cell.

He was sick with a dull sense of misery and pain; yet, with that lovely, laughing face before him, it seemed impossible to be ungracious; he must smile, he must talk. By and by he would tell her, and there would be sunshine in her face never more.

She was looking up at him in some wonder; she had been too deeply absorbed in her own happiness to notice him. Now it slowly dawned across her that he seemed rather to receive her love than to return it. She could remember nothing that he had said; voluntarily, he had not addressed her; true, his eyes seemed to devour her—no one single glance or word of hers escaped him; but, now that she came to think of it, what had he said? Last night, in the tumult of her joy—her joy at finding him, at making friends with him, her pain at his changed appearance—she had not remarked upon his manner to herself; she had taken it for granted that it would be the same with him as with herself. Now, looking at him, she was struck with the depth of pain in his eyes, the sad, wearied, expression, the drooping, dejected attitude. What could it mean, when he had found her? She went up to him.

“Clinton,” she said, very gently, “will you answer me one question?”

“I will answer as many, my darling, as you like to ask,” he replied.

“There is only one,” she said—“one plain, simple question. Tell me, do you love me quite as much as you used to do? Remember, I shall be neither hurt nor angry if you say no—it will be all my own fault; but there is something so strange about you; you are not what you were. Now, tell me truly, do you love me less?”

Love her less! He groaned involuntarily. Love her less! Would to Heaven that he did; the task before him would not be so terrible.

“Love you less, May?” he replied. “No, in all truth. If it be possible to love you even more than I did when the fancied loss of you drove me mad, I love you more now.”

“Do you?” she asked, a little sadly.

He smiled—a smile ten times more pitiful than tears would have been.

“Do you know,” he said, “an old song, that never left me, sleeping or waking, while I was away from you—a quaint, sweet song?”

She shook her beautiful head in grave, sweet silence.

“A song, the refrain of which filled every moment of my life—

“I am weary waiting—
Waiting for the May.”

“Is it really so?” she asked, a sudden light flashing in her face. “And you love me better than ever?”

“Better than ever,” he replied, sadly.

Then again she looked at him wonderingly.

“But, Clinton, you are so changed. In the time gone past, if I had asked you such a question, how you would have—well, you would have answered it very differently.”

"How should I have answered it?" he asked, trying to throw off the care that overshadowed him.

"You would have gone into raptures, and have made ever so many pretty speeches," she replied; "now you take it coolly, as a matter-of-fact; and I," she added, with a charming smile—"I have not reached the matter-of-fact age yet."

"I should hope not," he said. "Ah, yes, May, I love you, not as well, but a thousand times better than I did."

If a man wants to know what real love is, and how to increase it, let him believe that the woman he loves is lost to him; that will teach him more than years of happiness spent in her presence.

"I have been weary, my darling," he added, passionately—"weary, waiting for my May."

She was more contented then; she looked at the handsome, haggard face, and smiled.

"After all," she thought, "the change in him is all my fault. It is because he loved me so much, and sorrowed for me so greatly, that he is altered. I must try to win him round to something like his own old happy self; no matter how hard the task, I will be patient with it."

"May," he said, gravely, sadly, "I have something I want to say to you."

He had screwed his courage up to the right point then. She turned a laughing face to him:

"I have something also that I want to say to you, Clinton. Listen to me first. Look outside, love. See how the sun is shining; see how the flowers bloom; see how the trees are dressed in green; listen how the birds sing and the bees hum; see how fair and lovely everything is, just as though Nature herself were glad because we had found each other. My love, we will not utter serious words or talk of serious things, but we will spend the day in the sunshine, and it shall be the happiest day of our lives."

CHAPTER XXX.

A DISAPPOINTED LADY.

"THE happiest day of our lives," repeated Lady May. "Oh, Clinton, how long is it since I had a really happy day!—never since you went away. There is a rhyme. Remember now what you have promised—not one anxious look, not one anxious word. We will spend the day among the flowers, and be carelessly happy as two butterflies in the sun."

He could not resist her.

"I will have one happy day," he said to himself; "one day to which we can both look back as to a last day in Paradise. I will tell her to-night before we part. One happy day out of a life-time—surely Heaven will not grudge me that."

"We will take these books with us; they will look like an apology for wasting time, and we will go into the conservatories, and there you must tell me, Clinton, all that you have done since we parted."

Would to Heaven he could—he asked no better place, the difficulty

lay in the telling. He called himself a coward and a traitor as he followed her; he loathed himself, he loathed the light of day; the sunshine and the flowers were hateful to him; it seemed to him that a brand was on his brow—the weight of his untold secret crushed him.

Lady May led the way to the cool, fragrant conservatory, where two chairs were placed near the flowers.

"Let us sit here," she said. "Do you remember, Clinton, how often we have sat here before you went away? This is one of the haunts I liked best to visit—it brought you so forcibly to my mind always. I hardly thought that we should sit here side by side again."

"Life is all a mystery," he said. "Why we do things, why we say them, why we perform certain actions and leave others undone, is all a mystery."

That was not quite the reply she expected, and it struck her as being strange that he made no response to her kindly words.

"I think," she replied, "that we make many of the mysteries, as we make many of the troubles. But, Clinton, we will not discuss either mysteries or troubles."

"What shall we discuss?" he asked, trying to affect an easy carelessness, which, however, sat badly on him.

"There are two subjects fitted for this lovely morning," she said—"love and flowers."

"Both ought to be easily discussed with you," he said; and again Lady May raised her innocent, wondering eyes to his face. There was something forced and unnatural in his conduct; his voice had not the true ring, his smile had not the sunshine, his compliments even had something unnatural and stiff about them.

"Clinton," she said, "I never saw any one so changed as you are; time has been cruel to you."

"It was not time," he said, dreamily; "it was you, May."

Her quick, crimson blush seemed to bring him back to himself.

"What an ungenerous speech!" he cried. "I am ashamed of myself. I was thinking aloud. May, you must forgive me."

"The thought is just as difficult to pardon as the words," she replied. "Oh, Clinton, shall you never cease to think of my faults?"

"I did not mean to mention it," he said.

She interrupted him:

"You are right, after all, Clinton—it is entirely my fault. You were happy enough, bright enough before you knew me."

"Knowing you has made all the happiness of my life, May," he replied.

She laid the books down and went over to him. She placed one white, jeweled hand upon his brow; she traced the veins with one pretty finger.

"Did I do this and this?" she said. "Is it I who have changed you—who have taken the light and gladness from the face I love so well? Is it I who have made you care-worn and anxious? Oh, my love, forgive me—I will give my life to make you happy again. I shall watch these lines one by one disappear; I shall watch the light come back to your eyes, the smile to your lips. I prophesy that in three weeks from now you are your old self again."

But he said to himself, with a groan: "Never—never more!"

"I shall be quite patient," she continued, with a charming smile; "so patient that you will say to yourself, 'This can not be Lady May.' I shall treat you just as I should one of those favorite flowers of mine; if I saw it drooping, I should tend it, cherish it, love it, keep all hurtful influence away from it. I shall do just the same with you."

His face flushed with delight, yet he would have given the world to escape. On the previous evening he had been so completely taken by surprise, that he had not attempted even to evade her caresses; now she was bending over him, her flower-like face near his, her perfumed hair touching his cheek, her white, warm hands near to his clasp; yet he did not dare to touch her. He said to himself that he was a coward and traitor, but not traitor base enough for that. He did not dare to touch with his lips the face so near his own.

The girl felt surprised, then wounded, at his coldness. She little knew the torture he was suffering.

"You are not so pleased to see me this morning, Clinton, as you were last night," she said, at length.

"I am more pleased, if possible," he said. "Every time I see you, May, the pleasure of seeing you grows greater—the pain of parting from you more bitter."

"Ah! that is more like yourself," she said—"more like the Clinton who used to go into rages of jealousy and raptures of love. I hardly know this calm, cool, collected gentleman who sits here."

"I hardly know myself," he replied.

She laid her fair, soft cheek on his hand.

"Because you are so pleased," she said; "you hardly know yourself because you are delighted to be with me again. Oh, my love, my love, I am sorry that you ever went away!"

"So am I," he repeated, in a voice so fervent and earnest that she said to herself that she must have been mistaken in thinking him cold or changed.

Still he never touched her, never clasped her hand in his own, never laid his hand on her golden hair.

"He has grown shy," she said; "he is afraid of me; he only remembers my whims and caprices; he does not think of my love."

She drew her chair nearer to his, thinking to herself, with a smile, that it was her turn to be the wooer now, and she began to talk to him, as she had been accustomed to talk, the light, loving, sparkling nothings men like to hear from the women they love best. She amused him in spite of himself; he forgot his troubles and his cares in listening to her. She had a keen sense of humor, and some of her stories were so droll it was impossible to refrain from laughing. She had no mean power of mimicry, and some of her imitations sent Sir Clinton into hearty fits of laughter.

"That is better," thought Lady May to herself, as she listened.

Gradually she charmed him out of his coldness, out of his reserve; his spirits seemed to rise with hers. He laughed, talked, jested in his old style; only ever and anon she, who watched him so closely, saw a dark shadow steal over him, an expression of care and painful thought. What could be the reason? Yet, so far, she was well pleased with the progress she had made.

"It is as though our positions were reversed," she said, "and I had to woo and win instead of him."

After a little the charm of her manner, her exquisite beauty, her exquisite grace, regained their mastery over him, and he was talking to her as if time had not parted them. The only difference she noticed was that he never attempted to caress her; no matter how close the sweet, white hand lay near him, his own never closed over it. She remembered when he used to plead for one clasp of her white fingers. What had changed him so?

The idea suddenly occurred to her that he adopted this line of conduct from a wish to please her; that she had always been so coy and reserved with him, he had adopted the same line of behavior, thinking to please her.

"I am changed, too," she thought. "I used to be so proud, so haughty; he thinks I am a goddess to be worshiped, not a woman to be loved."

So, although she had won him back to something like their old standing-point, Lady May was somewhat disappointed. She would have been happier had he taken her once in his arms and kissed her, saying:

"We will be friends, and bury the past, dear."

But he did nothing of the kind. He talked gayly enough while the conversation was only of general matters; but the moment that it became personal, he was mute. He discussed politics, literature, art, the news of the day, their different friends, but neither himself nor her. She was roused by hearing the bell for lunch; she looked up at him playfully.

"Clinton, our happy wooing is all over; there is the bell for lunch. This morning has gone, never to return."

"Never to return," he repeated to himself; "with all its pains and its pleasures, never to return!"

They went into the dining-room for lunch, and Miss Lockwood met them with a smiling face. In her own mind she thought that, by this time, they would have settled the wedding-day. Lady May went to her room to make some pretty addition to her toilet, and Miss Lockwood followed her.

"Is it all right, my dear?" she asked, anxiously.

Lady May could not explain why she sighed, as she replied:

"Yes, certainly—quite right."

"And have you nothing to tell me?" continued the elder lady—"nothing of any kind?"

Again the vague sense of disappointment came over Lady May.

"What news should I have?" she asked, with some slight annoyance.

"I thought, perhaps," said Miss Lockwood, "that you had arranged your wedding-day."

"There is plenty of time for that," said Lady May, with a careless laugh; yet the laugh had something of pain in it.

"I know you will not think any questions of mine impertinent, May," said Miss Lockwood, "because your interest is mine, and your joys and sorrows are mine. Has Sir Clinton said nothing of the wedding-day?"

"Not yet," laughed Lady May. "I do not think he has quite recovered from the surprise of seeing me."

She had laughed as she spoke, but even she owned to herself that it was passing strange. She had been a whole morning with her lover, and he had not said one word to her of love—he had not even mentioned marriage, he who had once never wearied of praying her to name the day.

It was more than strange. She tried to have recourse to her old formula of belief—that it was her own fault, that she herself had brought about the change within him; but it was in vain—that reflection had not half so much comfort in it as it had once.

They went down to lunch, and then she thought that surely she had been mistaken. He was all kindness, all devotion; he amused Miss Lockwood and herself by a hundred anecdotes, by his descriptions of people whom he had met. They lingered long, until Lady May turned to her companion, with a bright face.

"Shall we ride this afternoon?" she asked.

For a moment it flashed across him that, if the announcement of his marriage had to be made, it would hardly do for him to be seen riding with her. It would be sure to excite comment and remark, therefore it would be better left alone.

"I think not," he replied; "it is very warm. I will read to you if you like."

But the answer was given with such hesitation that Lady May could not help remarking it.

"My dear," whispered Miss Lockwood, as they left the drawing-room—"my dear May, he is really more delightful than ever; but, do you know, I have a strange fancy."

"What is it?" asked Lady May.

"I thought he did not seem to care about riding out with you; is it so, do you think?"

"He seemed to hesitate, but it is really very warm, and he does not seem over-strong. There could be no other possible reason for his declining."

"I suppose not," said Miss Lockwood; yet she did not seem quite satisfied. More than once she said to herself, during that day, that Sir Clinton Adair was quite unlike himself.

CHAPTER XXXI

A CHANGED MAN.

WHEN Sir Clinton entered Cliffe House on that morning, he had fully intended that his secret should be told before night—he had not dreamed of keeping it after the day was over. It was one happy day snatched from life-long pain, yet it was not all happiness; every moment he passed with her added to his pain; every charm of hers—her fair face, her grace of movement, her grace of words, actions and thoughts—all increased his love for her. He thought to himself every moment what might have been, what a cruel difference between what was and what might have been. But for that mad marriage—that foolish, mad marriage of his—he

could now be asking Lady May to hasten her wedding-day. He pictured to himself the radiant happiness that would have been his, the life they would have led together, now that Lady May had learned to love him so well at last. Now it was all over—this unloved wife of his stood between him and his fair young love; she could never now be his, and he should have to tell her so when the day was ended.

They spent a long, happy, sunny afternoon together in the drawing-room. Lady May had said to him:

“Why, Clinton, we have spent a whole day together, and yet you have not told me one single thing that you did while you were away. All those months are gone out of your life, and I know nothing of them.”

“I will tell you all about them to-night,” he had replied, but his manner was strange and confused.

Suddenly it seemed to her that he had no great wish to speak of this part of his life. Perhaps he had passed it in listless, idle dreaming of her, and was ashamed to tell her so; perhaps he had spent it in going aimlessly from one place to another, and did not care to tell her how completely the time had been wasted. She resolved that it should not happen again—that she would speak to him more of the future, never more of the past—it should be a sealed book between them. She could trust him; in all those months she felt quite certain that he had never once been untrue to her.

So, when dinner was over, and the fair, dewy, fragrant evening drawing to a close, he knew the time had come when he must break her heart. It must be done. People would soon begin to talk about them—to associate them together. It would not be fair to her to keep that marriage quiet even for another day.

They had gone into one of the pretty little balconies that led from the drawing-room windows, and then he said to himself that he must tell her the plain, unvarnished truth; he would make no excuses for himself—indeed, he had none to offer. The plain fact was he believed Lady May to be married, and lost to him forever, and he had married pretty, simple Daisy, because she had declared herself that she should die when he went away. No tale could be more simple or more concise. Why should it be so difficult to tell? He looked at the face, doubly fair in the moonlight. He saw before him a vision of shining silk and soft white lace, of a lovely face, and the sheen of golden hair; he saw the light of her jewels, and the light in her eyes; he saw deep, pure, true love for himself in every feature of her face, and he turned away with despair more bitter than death in his heart. Oh, pale, pitiless moonlight, that had no compassion for him; pale, pitiless stars, that had in them no gleam of mercy! He must tell her—tell her that he was married, and could never be more to her while the world stood.

“May,” he began in a low, unsteady voice—“May, you asked me this morning to tell you all that I had done and had seen—all that I had lived through since I went away. I am ready to tell you now, if you are ready to listen.”

She was quite silent for half a minute, then she said:

“My dearest Clinton, I will not listen to one word; I refuse abso-

lutely to listen. I am quite sure of one thing—you may have wasted, idled, or even ill-spent the time during which you have been away, but you have been quite true to me; nothing in the whole wide world can shake my faith in that. You have kept your love for me free, and pure, and true; the rest does not concern me, and I refuse to listen to it."

He made some faint protest; he began again, but she placed her white hand on his lips.

"There," she said, triumphantly, "you can not be so rude as to talk now. I will not listen. You can not receive a greater compliment than for the woman you love to trust you. Instead of talking about this past, which I pronounce to be dead and buried for both of us, we will talk of the future—the future that shines before us, bright and clear as the summer heavens—that will have a thousand times more interest for us."

But, to her surprise, he remained mute and dumb.

"It has a charm for you, although at this moment you are too proud to say so. I live in it; there is no hour of my life in which I do not thank Heaven for it," she added, quickly. "Oh, love! my love! what would that future have been without you?"

Then she had not time to say more. Miss Lockwood came out to them, and all chance of conversation was over for the evening, and he had not told her. He said "good-night" to her, holding her hands in his, looking with wistful, haggard eyes into her face, his lips trembling. He looked at the sweet white hands, but dare not kiss them; he looked at the lovely, flower-like face, but dare not touch it; his hand clasped hers, but no warm pressure told her how dearly he loved her.

"Good-night," she repeated, glancing with wonder into his face. Would he always be so cold, so reserved with her? Would he ever understand that she was changed, and that she would fain win him from his reserve? Then, with that same strange, wistful look on his face, he went away, leaving her dissatisfied and ill at ease.

"Not a very lover-like parting," said Miss Lockwood, with a smile; "your lover has peculiar notions. I should imagine that he considers a kiss next door to a sin."

"There are worse faults than being too reserved," said Lady May; "it is not the vice of the age. Most of the men I know would be the better for a little of Sir Clinton's reserve."

But though she defended him, and affected to admire his great discretion, in her own heart she was ill at ease. When she stood that night in her room, she thought long and deeply. This was the man who had been so passionately in love with her, who had gone mad, he said, with the love of her: this was the man who had lived in the light of her eyes. She had spent a whole day with him, and he had never once spoken of love or of marriage to her; he had not alluded to the past in which they were lovers, or to the future in which they were to be man and wife; he had never clasped her hand in his, he had not called her by any one of the loving epithets he had been wont to use toward her. What could it mean? Not want of love, if his eyes spoke truly; not want of devotion to her; it could not mean that there was any barrier between them. What could there be?

"I wonder," said Lady May to herself, "if he would have sought me out? I wonder if it was for my sake that he came back to England—if it was to woo me?"

And then she half repented of the loving impulse that had led her to seek him.

"I did wrong," she said to herself, a crimson flush mounting to her face. "Perhaps if I had not sought him he would not have sought me; yet how can I think that of him, when he loves me so dearly, so well?"

She repeated those words to herself as she laid her head on the pillow, yet her heart was heavy. She had found him again; but this was not the love she had lost—this was not the passionate, reckless, jealous, ardent lover who seemed jealous even of the wind that touched her face. This was a cool, calm, self-disciplined man.

"And ah, me!" she sighed to herself—she liked the old lover best. "Time would set it all right," yet her heart was heavy and sore within her.

Nor did Sir Clinton feel much happier; he heaped every contemptuous epithet on himself; he called himself weak, a coward, and a traitor. He ought to have told her; but how in Heaven's name was he to do so now? Her reproaches would overwhelm him; the sight of her sorrow would overwhelm him, too.

"Never was man so wretched as I," he said to himself, "and all my own fault."

The next day he did not go near her; he was miserable. Having been an honorable gentleman all his life, he could not bear this sense of concealment; he was not one who could ever be happy in evil doing; he was not, as a rule, a moral coward, but his whole soul shrunk from the task of telling his fair young love that he was married. The morning passed away—slow, long hours that seemed endless. Then came a note from Lady May; they thought of returning to Trevlyn's Nest on the morrow. She had only come up to town just to see him. A small party of friends—Sir John and Lady Lewis—were returning with them; would he follow them in the course of a day or two? The postscript said:

"Do not write your answer; bring it."

"Do you think he will come?" Miss Lockwood asked half doubtingly, when Lady May told her what she had done.

"Come? Of course he will, and be very pleased to do so."

But Miss Lockwood shook her head gravely.

"I do not know, my dear," she said. "Sir Clinton Adair is a changed man."

Yet he took his answer. He found Lady May alone in her drawing-room, and, to his loving, admiring eyes, she had never seemed half so beautiful. She wore a dress of white lace and muslin curiously interwoven, and she had chosen real flowers for her ornaments—nothing but faint, mystical, dreamy, white lilies, and they suited her fair aristocratic loveliness as nothing else could have done. The man who had loved her so well and who had lost her saw that she was more reserved in her greeting. She held out a white hand, and her lips wore a charming smile, but she did not advance to meet him. She did not raise her face as though sure of a lover's kiss; she had caught his own spirit of reserve.

That piqued him. So strange, so contradictory are men! He had wished that she would not be so demonstrative of her love for him; now that she showed some sign of reserve, he was piqued and vexed. He saw that she had resolved upon imitating him; she said no word of herself; she told him some amusing anecdotes of Lady Lewis; she sketched for his edification the portrait of a visitor they had had that morning. She was cold, gay, graceful, amusing—all the deep, earnest, tender love, the pure, womanly passion had vanished like snow when kissed by the sun. She did not use one endearing word; she seemed bent only on amusing him, and he was vexed at it.

He had come to say that he found it impossible to go to Trevlyn Nest, that he had imperative business in London, and this was how he fared. When she had exhausted her little sketches, she looked up at him as though suddenly remembering something.

"I had forgotten," she said, "you were to bring your answer; did you not, Clinton?"

"I am afraid that my answer will hardly please you, May," he replied.

"It is a refusal, then," she said, coldly. "Well, we each know our own affairs best. If you do not come, I must find some one else to make the party complete."

But that was not to be borne. His face flushed with annoyance that she should take his refusal so calmly, and invite some one else in his place—it was not to be dreamed of.

"You are hasty at jumping to conclusions," he said. "I hope to go to Trevlyn Nest, if you will permit me."

The sudden look of happiness and tenderness that came over her face repaid him.

"You do love me a little, then," she said. "I was beginning to believe that you did not care for me at all."

"I pray Heaven that you may never love any one half so much," he said, sadly, as their interview terminated.

CHAPTER XXXII.

LOVE AND FLOWERS.

A WEEK later found the whole of the little party assembled at Trevlyn Nest. Sir Clinton was there; he had not intended to go, just as he had not intended to conceal the fact of his marriage; yet he had gone, and the fact of his marriage was still unannounced.

He had said to himself, with a kind of despair, that he must swim with the current—it was too late now to retrieve his position; that he ought to have told Lady May of it at once—now it was too late. He could not; he must swim with the current; he must keep his secret a little longer. He had some half kind of plan in his mind that he would remain for some time at Trevlyn Nest, then go back to Daisy, and, when he had once more fastened the chains of his bondage around him, he would write to Lady May.

In the meantime he would enjoy the pleasure of her society—he would drive away dull care—he would laugh and jest with the best of them. Life would be quite long enough for all he had to suffer. Then he pitied himself—there never, surely, was a man born to so

wretched a fate; his life had been a failure all through this one unfortunate love. He hated himself; for no matter what sophistry he used, no matter how specious his thoughts and words, he knew that he had stained his honor—had forfeited the name of gentleman—had branded himself as coward and traitor. Even in his guilt he was to be pitied.

On the third day after their arrival at Trevlyn Nest, the party was joined by Colonel Grantley, a frank, handsome soldier, who had seen some hard service in India, and had, on his return, fallen desperately in love with Lady May. He was a cousin of Lady Lewis, and had invited himself to Trevlyn under the pretext of seeing her. The colonel never attempted the least disguise, and his love, his homage was most publicly rendered—he seemed to consider Lady May the queen of all creation. Sir Clinton's love for her, in its innocent and best days, had been a passionate, fierce love; Colonel Grantley's was honest, manly, and kind, without the elements of tragedy, but yet a love that might have made any woman proud. No one could be in the same room long with Colonel Grantley without knowing that he loved the beautiful Lady May, after a soldier's fashion, with all his heart.

Needless to say how heartily Sir Clinton Adair detested him. But for the colonel and his genial devotion Sir Clinton would not probably have remained so long at Trevlyn Nest; as it was, he could not go away and leave the field open to his rival.

"Yet," he said, "how contemptible I am; I can never win her for myself, and I will let no one else have a chance."

His jealousy rather flattered Lady May. Always puzzling over the great change in him, she eagerly welcomed every trifling show of preference as a proof that, although his manner might be changed, his love remained unaltered. She found it rather puzzling to have two such devoted lovers. Colonel Grantley's admiration was a source of amusement to her—there was something so irresistibly entertaining about it.

"I ought to go back to London," said Sir Clinton to her one morning; "but I can not."

"You can not! Why?" she asked.

"Because I can not endure the thought of leaving you with Colonel Grantley," he replied.

"Colonel Grantley is nothing to me," she said, gently, "and you are everything."

Then she thought to herself:

"If he is so very anxious to secure me, why does he not ask me to marry him?" and her eyes spoke her thoughts so plainly that he turned away in utter confusion.

Lady May had arrived at a certain conclusion by this time, and it was that Sir Clinton loved her just as well as ever, yet he had made up his mind to test her—to try her before he married her—she could find no other solution to his conduct.

"It serves me quite right," she said to herself, frankly, "and I will be quite patient over it. He tried me before, and I was found terribly wanting; he shall be satisfied with the test now."

She had told Miss Lockwood of her belief, who most cordially joined in it, having been much puzzled to discover the motive of

Sir Clinton's conduct. That seemed satisfactory. She laughed good-temperedly over it.

"You did behave heartlessly to him, May; no wonder that he wants to try you. He finds it difficult to believe in your reformation, perhaps."

So that Lady May had recovered her flow of charming spirits, it was all right; her lover was only testing her good faith—he should see that she was sincere.

One little incident was vividly impressed on Sir Clinton's mind—Colonel Grantley had seen the flutter of Lady May's dress among the trees, and, as usual, hastened out on the lawn. Lady Lewis joined them, and they walked until they reached the wood-clustered glade that led to the wood. Then Sir Clinton could bear it no longer; that frank, handsome soldier was talking gayly—looking, with all his heart in his handsome eyes, into Lady May's face. He went after them.

"It is only a few steps now to the wood," said Lady Lewis, "and, above all things, I love the shade of a wood on a summer day. Do let us go there, Lady May."

"If some one will open the gate for us," she replied. "When I was here last year alone, I used to spend every morning in that wood."

"I will open the gate," said the colonel. "I should open the gate were it twice as big, and twice as high, if you required it, Lady May."

"You are certainly very industrious, colonel," said his cousin. "You never lose an opportunity of paying compliments to Lady May."

The heiress of Trevlyn listened with an unmoved smile. What were all his compliments to her? One word from Sir Clinton was worth them all.

"It is a lovely wood," she said; "the bluebells stretch out like the waves of a blue sea; the primroses stand in great golden clusters; there is every variety of wild flowers and trees. Here we are at last. Now, is it not a glorious wood?"

There was a break among the trees, a wide stretch of thick, green grass, and they sat down, the sun shining above them, and casting graceful shadows on the grass below; the birds singing in the trees, the wind gently stirring the green boughs. They talked for some little time on desultory matters, until Sir Clinton said something about the flowers.

Colonel Grantley answered him.

"I think," he said, "it was a pretty, fanciful, graceful idea to call ladies by the names of flowers. I wish they had no other names."

"They are not very numerous," said Lady Lewis.

"I do not know. We have Violet, Rose, Lily, Azalea, Hyacinth, Daisy, and, last and sweetest, May."

"That is a pretty long list," said Lady Lewis.

"I think the names are so characteristic," said the colonel; "for example, Violet should be tall, with meek, sweet eyes, and soft, brown hair, a sweet face, suggestive of dew and moonlight. Rose, one pictures a lovely, laughing, happy girl, with sunshine in her

eyes and on her hair. Lily, tall, pale, and slender, with large, innocent blue eyes, beautiful lips, and hair of a pale gold. Azalea, dark, with a bewitching Spanish loveliness. Hyacinth, a girl to rave about under the light of the stars, dreary and mystical. Daisy—well, Daisy puzzles me—a simple, pretty country lassie, I think, with wondering blue eyes, and a sweet, half saucy smile, piquant, with a certain quaint grace. May—oh, if I were a poet, I could sing of May; as it is, I have before me fairest representative of the fairest name. I once heard of a young lady called Bluebells, but I do not think the name a common one. I have often wondered why girls were not called after the lilac and the mignonette; what prettier girl's name could we have than Verbena? Verbena, by the way, should be a tall, dark-eyed girl, with crimson lips."

Lady May carelessly gathered a white daisy from the grass; she held it lovingly in her pretty fingers.

"It is a beautiful flower," she said; "if it were as rare as it is common we should all talk about it. I think it one of the prettiest flowers that grow; and do you know," she added, with a little laugh, "I never cross a field if I can help it, lest I should trample upon a daisy. I could not bear to crush one beneath my feet; it would be like pressing the life from something living."

"I shall take the daisy as my crest," said Colonel Grantley; "and every one I see, Lady May, I shall love for your sweet sake."

She turned her fair face and laughing eyes to Sir Clinton.

"Have you nothing pretty to say to me?" she asked. "Colonel Grantley is quite an adept in the art. Do you approve of my taste?"

"Over daisies, you mean, Lady May?"

"Yes, over these simple field-daisies," she replied.

The words seemed to stab him with keen, sudden pain. How often had he used them! Lady May gathered another—a large white daisy, round like a star, with creamy white petals, and a deep golden heart.

"Is not that more beautiful than a hot-house blossom?" she asked.

Lady Lewis laughed.

"Sir Clinton is blushing," she said.

He felt the hot crimson mount even to his brow.

"Why should I blush?" he said, calmly.

"Perhaps the little daisy suggests some tender love messages in the past," laughed Colonel Grantley.

"No," said Lady May; "Sir Clinton might blush over a rose or a violet—never over a daisy; it is too simple, too lowly for him."

Even as she spoke there rose before him the memory of a face, daintily sweet, with innocent blue eyes and sweet red lips. A meek, half-sad, half-reproachful, but wholly sweet face; eyes like blue hyacinths, swimming in tears. A low voice seemed to say, "Good-by, Caro, good-by." Ah, what was he doing, lingering, loitering here? He flung the simple little flower to the ground, then raised it suddenly, as though he would caress it.

"Poor daisy!" said Lady May, and he looked at her in blank, wondering fear.

"Of whom are you speaking?" he asked.

There was a general laugh at his expense.

"I am speaking of the daisy you first held in your hand, then flung away," said Lady May, and again the words stabbed him with the keenest pain; they were so near the truth that he trembled.

Then he rose suddenly.

"What nonsense we talk on these sunshiny mornings!" he said. "Surely we can find some other topic besides flowers; every one talks about flowers."

"I think we have had a very interesting conversation," said Colonel Grantley. "I knew a girl named Daisy once."

"Did you? Where and who?" asked Lady Lewis.

"It was in India. But talk of simplicity—well, she did not go in for that kind of thing; if there is anything in a name, hers should have been Dahlia."

"I always thought Daisy was an abbreviation of Margaret," said Lady May.

Then they looked up in wonder, for Sir Clinton had suddenly risen from his lounging attitude, and had walked toward a large silver-birch tree.

Lady Lewis laughed.

"I could almost fancy that Sir Clinton had loved a Daisy," she said; "the very word seems to agitate him."

"No," said Colonel Grantley; "he loves the white, sweet-perfumed, mystical May, and he makes no secret of his love."

"I will not hear another word," said Lady May. "We must return. What will Miss Lockwood say when she hears that we have spent the morning in the wood?"

But from that time something of regret came over Sir Clinton whenever he saw the pretty white flowers in the green grass. He never forgot those words:

"You held a daisy in your hand, and then you flung it away."

That was what he had done—gathered the sweet, fresh, simple flower, and thrown it away.

He wondered more than once if Colonel Grantley could possibly know anything about that fair young wife waiting for him in sunny France. Then he would waken up to a sudden sense of intolerable pain and self-contempt, hating himself even more than he hated his sin.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A LETTER FROM FRANCE.

"I CAN not make him out," said Colonel Grantley. "I am afraid it is as you say, Louisa, that he is awfully in love with Lady May."

"I am sure of it," interrupted Lady Lewis. "I have watched him, and I do not think that he has a thought apart from her."

"Why does he not say so, then? I do not understand it. If he loves her, and desires to marry her, why does he not say so?"

"You had better ask him, colonel; it is of no use growing angry with me."

"I am not angry with you; but, all the same, you must own there is something absurd about it. If he loves her, and wants to marry

her, well and good — let him say so; if not, why does he not go away, and leave the field open for others?"

"That means for you."

"Yes, for me," replied the colonel. "I should never 'shilly-shally' after that fashion. If I loved a woman, I should say so, and ask her to marry me. I would do so at once; but he never allows me a chance. He is always with her, haunts her like her own shadow, looks daggers if any one else comes near her."

"All that would not matter," said Lady Lewis, "unless in her turn, she liked him."

The colonel looked crestfallen.

"You are right," he said. "Now I come to remember, she makes his opportunities. Yesterday morning I had her for a whole delicious ten minutes all to myself; we were on the croquet ground, and I was explaining some of our Indian games to her. She was so interested and so kind, when, all at once, Sir Clinton Adair came out on the lawn. She forgot all about me; she called him to her with a smile, and a look in her face that I would have given my life for. He came; but, Louisa, he did not look pleased. I should have been ready to fall on my knees in a transport of gratitude if she had shown so much attention to me."

"You would look well on your knees," laughed his cousin. "But I have noticed just the same thing. He looks half afraid of her, in some strange way; he looks confused and embarrassed, when another man would look happy."

"I do not think he is happy," said the colonel. "By the way, Louisa, if I tell you something, you will not repeat it?"

"I will not," said Lady Lewis.

"Honor bright, as we say in the army," cried Colonel Grantley.

"Honor bright, as we say in the world," she repeated.

"Do you remember a conversation we had one morning about ladies' names?"

"Perfectly well," replied Lady Lewis.

"I thought," continued the colonel, "that Sir Clinton seemed rather grim over it; he did not like it, evidently."

"No," acquiesced Lady Lewis; "I do not think that he did."

"He came to me the same day and asked me if I had any meaning in what I said. I answered him that I hoped, for my own credit's sake, there was meaning in all that I said. He grew quite impatient."

"Had you any particular person in your mind," he asked, "when you were sketching those fancy portraits?"

"I looked at him in astonishment."

"Certainly not," I replied.

"Then he seemed confused—he apologized."

"I imagined," he said, "that it was so; and you are so open and frank, Colonel Grantley, I knew you would tell me if I asked you."

"Which of my fancy portraits struck you most?" I asked.

"I am sorry that, not being able to imitate your fearlessness, I can not say," he replied, with a smile.

"Now, Louisa, in thinking that over, do you know the conclusion I have arrived at? It is this, that Sir Clinton has another love affair of some kind or other, which really keeps him from marrying Lady May."

"I can not think it; I knew him years ago; I never heard his name mentioned in connection with any one else. She is, I believe, the one only love of his life-time."

"Well, I shall risk all," said the colonel; "I love her just as much as he does. I can make her happy, and I intend asking her to-day if she will be my wife."

"She will say no," replied Lady Lewis.

The soldier's handsome face fell.

"Do you think so?" he replied, wistfully. "At all events, I shall try it. I could not go on like Sir Clinton, waiting about, keeping every one else wretched. Yes or no for me at once."

"And suppose she says no, colonel?"

"Well—Heaven bless her beautiful face—if she says no, I shall go off to India again and try to forget. I must either be all or nothing. If she dismisses me as a lover, I can not pretend to be her friend. If she will not marry me, I am 'off to the wars again.'"

"Then I am afraid we shall say good-by. Women see further into these matters than men. Lady May is just as much in love with Sir Clinton as he is with her."

"Then why do they not marry? I will not believe it. If they cared about each other, why not marry? There is no obstacle; they are both rich, free, young, noble—I can see no barrier. Perhaps, after all, Louisa, they are only old friends."

"You must try for yourself," said Lady Lewis; and she felt sorry for the disappointment that was sure to fall on the handsome, generous soldier.

He made his offer that same day, and was, as a matter of course, refused.

"You have been so loyal and so frank with me," said Lady May, "that I will tell you the truth, Colonel Grantley. I can not marry you, because I have been engaged for years to one whom I love very dearly."

He looked at her with a wistful smile.

"Will you pardon me if I say a very impertinent thing, Lady May?" he asked.

"I will pardon you, because I know that you can never be really impertinent," she replied.

"I mean it in all kindness—in self-defense. If you have been engaged so long, why not either make your engagement public, or marry? You see, it is not fair to us; we see you so beautiful and so winsome, apparently free, and we can not help loving you. In pity to us, you ought to let this be known. I must always admire you, but I would not have allowed myself to fall so hopelessly in love with you, had I known that you were engaged."

She looked thoughtfully at him.

"I see," she said; "I had not thought of it in that light. I shall remember what you have said, Colonel Grantley, and thank you for it."

The following day was a day of mourning when the handsome colonel took his departure.

The servants made their own very amusing comments upon the matter.

"I know," said the still-room maid, "if I had to choose between

those two gentlemen, I should have taken the soldier. I think he is worth twenty of Sir Clinton; but I suppose my lady has sent him away."

Nor were the servants the only people who thought the frank, handsome soldier preferable to the more aristocratic Sir Clinton. On the day after his departure, some one said, during dinner, how much he was missed; he seemed to have taken half the brightness of the house away with him. Afterward, when Lady Lewis was at the piano—she never wearied of singing—Sir Clinton found a seat by Lady May.

"I suppose," he said, "that the cause of our young soldier's departure is no secret; every one seems to be discussing it."

"Every one is very impertinent, then," she replied; "the colonel's affairs concern no one else."

"Not even me?" he said.

"Oh, yes, you—you, of course; you are different. I meant these other people; they have no right to discuss him."

"He made his love too apparent to escape observation," said Sir Clinton.

"They may talk as much as they like about his love, but—"

Sir Clinton interrupted her.

"But they must not mention his rejection."

"No; they have no right to mention that," she replied, with some little warmth. "I liked Colonel Grantley; he was so honest and genuine, no one could help liking him."

"I agree with you; and you have refused him, May?"

She looked up at him with surprise that he never forgot.

"Could I accept him?" she replied. "What a strange question for you to ask me!"

She saw his great confusion and embarrassment, wondering what it could possibly mean. The impulse was strong upon him to tell her the truth—she was wasting her life, throwing it away. If he had only dared to tell her; but the knowledge of her great love for him, and of the intense pain it would cause her, was the chief reason why he hesitated. Lady May was looking at him; her clear, eloquent eyes seemed to read his soul through.

"How could I accept him or any one else, Clinton," she said, "when for the last three years I have considered myself your promised wife?"

He would have given the world for courage to have told her then that he had a wife, an unloved wife of his own, and could never marry her; but his lips refused to frame the words; it seemed to him almost easier to die now than to tell her. He bent down, and almost for the first time since his return, he kissed the white hands.

"You are too good," he said; "I am unworthy of you."

But she would not allow that; he was her knight, her hero, worthy of all love, of all honor. That day seemed to bring them together. He was in an agony of self-reproach; but for him she might, perhaps, have married this gallant, handsome soldier, and have been happy at last. The very sense he had of the wrong he had done, and was doing to her, made him more devoted to her. There was something of his old manner—a loving, protecting tenderness, a

kind of appropriation of her—that brought happiness to the heart of Lady May.

“He has tested me,” she thought, “and he has not found me wanting. He has stood by gently, and watched Colonel Grantley fall in love with me. He knows that I am true to him, and shall be for evermore. Now he will ask me to be his wife without more delay.”

The whole of that sunny day, after the colonel’s departure, she expected to hear those words; but they were not spoken. On the morning following, the weather was so beautiful, so fine, the sky so blue and cloudless, the air so full of fragrance, that it was impossible to remain within doors; they went out on to the broad western terrace, the ladies with some pretty fancy-work. Sir John Lewis strolled away to the stables; Sir Clinton took a book to read aloud. They formed a most picturesque group, and Sir Clinton was reading—seemingly to all of them, in reality to Lady May—when a servant came to say that a gentleman was waiting to see Sir Clinton Adair.

Sir Clinton raised his handsome head.

“Are you quite sure,” he asked, “that there is no mistake? I do not expect any gentleman. Oh, you have a card, I see.”

He took it.

“Mr. Fildes, from Messrs. Cooper. They are my solicitors. I will see him.”

“I hope,” said Lady May, anxiously, “there is nothing the matter.”

“No,” he replied, carelessly; “there is nothing which can be the matter. I hope some one has found a coal mine on the estate.” Then he sighed to think how little happiness that could bring him.

He followed the servant, and found Mr. Fildes waiting for him, he had a packet with him. He bowed to Sir Clinton.

“Mr. Cooper received this early this morning from France, Sir Clinton, and as it is marked ‘Immediate,’ he thought that he had better send it to you at once.”

Sir Clinton took the packet; his hand trembled as he opened it. It contained a letter from France, from Leville, but written in French, in a hand that was strange to him. He read it hastily. It was from a Dr. Lecroix, written by the bedside of his wife, and it was to tell him that his wife, Mrs. Clifton, was lying in danger of death, and begged to see him. It added also that the writer, finding her almost alone, had provided her with nurses, and attended her himself, finishing with the words that Mr. Clifton was entreated to come at once, as he was now the father of a beautiful little son, whose birth had taken place on the fourth of the month, and Mrs. Clifton had been dangerously ill ever since.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A MAN OF MYSTERY

SIR CLINTON read that letter with the air of a man suddenly recalled from another world—he was dazed and bewildered. Daisy lying sick unto death, and he the father of a little son!

Mr. Fildes watched him narrowly—saw his face change from its expression of careless indifference to one of wonder and fear—saw the lips grow white, and the strong limbs tremble.

“I hope, Sir Clinton,” he said, “that you have no bad news. Mr. Cooper thought it must be something very urgent.”

“I hope it may not turn out so bad,” he replied, hardly knowing what he said. “I am much obliged to you for your kindness in coming so quickly.”

“Mr. Cooper wished me to ask if you would be in London this week, Sir Clinton; he has some papers for you to sign.”

“No; I start for France to-day. It may be some time before I am in England again; business must wait until my return. I will write a letter of instruction to Mr. Cooper before I go.”

Some refreshment was brought for the clerk, and Sir Clinton took his leave of him. He went back to the garden, and it seemed to him that he must be walking in his sleep, must be dreaming. There was the smooth, green lawn, the broad terrace with its cool shade of trees; there were Lady Lewis and Lady May. He had not been away from them very long, yet a world seemed to lie between them. He returned with the knowledge that Daisy was in danger and he had a little son.

He looked in the face of his fair young love. I think if he had been alone with her that moment, he would have told her all; but Lady Lewis was with her, and the chance was lost. Lady May looked at him with a smile.

“You have not been long away,” she said. “Here is your book; I have kept the place, you see.”

He took it from her hands gravely, and laid it down upon the grass; then she noticed that he had the dazed, dreamy air of a man whose faculties are stunned. He was gazing at her, uncertain what to say.

“Clinton,” she asked, gently, “have you had any unexpected news—any unpleasantness?”

“I have had very unexpected news,” he replied; “and, May, I am very sorry, but I am compelled to leave Trevlyn. I am most grievously disappointed, but I must go to-day.”

How the light died from her lovely face, leaving dull, anxious care behind! Her eyes drooped sadly from his.

“Going!” she said, and he never forgot the pathos of her voice—“going! You can not mean it, Clinton. But, then, you will return—you will not be long away?”

“I am afraid not,” he replied; “not just yet, I fear. I do not know quite when I shall be in England again.”

“In England! Are you going abroad, Clinton?”

“Yes,” he replied, briefly; “I am going to France.”

She looked at him, her eyes swimming in tears, her lips quivering. They had walked some little distance from where Lady Lewis was sitting.

“Clinton,” said Lady May, “do not be so reserved with me; you punish me too cruelly; you are too hard; you keep me outside your life. Tell me where you are going, and why?”

“I am going,” he replied, “on some business that I left when I

was in France before—business that I—I have neglected, and I have been suddenly summoned over to it.”

“Is that all?” she said. “I was afraid—I do not know of what. When are you going?”

“Immediately—that is, if you will permit one of your grooms to drive me to the station. I will return as soon as I can.”

“I can not realize it,” she said. She was standing against the great rose-bushes, her eyes, shining through her tears, raised to his, her face blanched even to the lips, and sad as the face of a grieving child. “I can not realize it, Clinton. I thought—I believed that we should never part again. I can not understand it.”

She walked on, and he followed, drawn to her by the force of his passionate love, even though his wife lay sick unto death, and he had never seen his little son; he followed her, and they walked through the quiet, secluded path that led to the shrubbery.

Had he nothing to say to her? she wondered, in a passion of anguish and grief. Now, at this last moment, would he not clasp her to his heart, kiss her face, tell her over and over again how dearly he loved her, pray her to be his wife? This is what she expected; that is surely what he would do. He could not leave her in that cruel uncertainty, at a loss to tell whether he cared for her, and whether he wanted to marry her or not—whether he wished her to settle their wedding-day or not. Surely now, in this last hour, he would break the mysterious silence that surrounded him. Slowly and sadly Lady May walked by his side, her wonder amounting to keenest pain; but never a word said he.

“Clinton,” she said, gravely, “I have often wondered as to whether I did right or wrong on the evening when I paid that visit to you. Sometimes I think that if I had not sought you, you would never have sought me—am I right?”

She was indeed so near the truth as to startle him.

“I never dared to hope that you could forgive me,” he said. “I am not sure I should have had the courage to speak to you had we met accidentally.”

“But now,” she said—“now that you see I am sorry—I did not mean it—I repented of it?”

“Now,” he replied, sadly, “I should never be afraid of you again. I shall write to you, May, and you—well, perhaps, you will be busy?”

“Never too busy to write to you,” she said, with some little indignation.

“My address will be uncertain for some time; I shall be traveling about. If you write to me, send your letters, addressed to me, to my solicitors, Messrs. Cooper & Co.; they will forward them with their own.”

She was more indignant than she cared to own.

“Is this going to be another mysterious absence?” she asked.

He looked confused.

“No, not mysterious, certainly not; but, May, I must go. My train starts at one, I have barely time to catch it.”

“You will take some lunch, some refreshment before you go, surely, Clinton?”

"No," he replied; "I can not; I want nothing. I can only think of one thing now, and that is, I have to say good-by to you."

"But why need you? You could surely go to France and return soon; you need not be so long away; and you—oh, Clinton, you make me say what I should not say; but this vague restraint and coldness that seem to have arisen between us ever since our reconciliation is all of your doing—none of it is mine. You are changed, cold, reserved; you keep me outside your own life, outside your heart. You punish me too cruelly for the wrong I did; you might forgive me now."

"I forgave you when you asked me," he said, hoarsely; "do not tempt me too far."

She stopped him with a wondering cry.

"Tempt you! Oh, Clinton, how strangely you talk!"

"I do," he said, hurriedly, taking her hand. "You must forgive me, and not think of it when I am gone. I am anxious and half scared by this sudden news."

"Is it loss of money, Clinton?" she asked; "because if it be so, you can have all mine."

"No; it is not loss of money; but another time I shall be able to tell you more. I must go."

She stood quite silent and motionless.

"Are you really going to leave me in this fashion?" she asked, something of the old proud spirit flashing through the whiteness of her face. She looked steadily at him. "Do you really remember," she asked, with sudden passion—"do you remember that you are Clinton Adair and I am May Trevlyn? What has come over you?—what has changed you, Clinton? If you have ceased to love me, for Heaven's sake, tell me so! Even your hate would be better than this unnatural calm, this dreadful indifference."

"There is neither carelessness nor indifference in my heart, May, believe me. There is nothing save cruel love and cruel pain."

"Why should you call love cruel?" she asked bitterly. "It is men who are cruel; they are worse than cruel."

"May," he cried, "do not say a word of reproach to me! Oh, my love! my love! believe me, I care for you as I care for no other woman under the broad, blue heavens. Believe me that I love you with my whole heart. I could not, if I would, love you more."

She relented at his words, for she detected the true ring of pain in them. She held out her hand, with a smile.

"Then, if it be so, Clinton, why are you so reserved with me?"

"I am a wretched, despairing, storm-tossed man!" he cried; and even when he uttered those words, she doubted his sanity rather than his truth and fidelity. "I must go, May," he repeated, in the same dulled voice of pain; "every moment is precious now."

For half a minute she was tempted to ask him if he wished to renew the old tie between them—if he wished to make her his wife; but prudence restrained her; she had humbled herself enough to him.

"You will say good-by to Miss Lockwood in the house?" she said.

"Yes; and you will make my farewell to your friends—I have not time. We shall have to drive post to the station."

"There is a great difference between this parting and the last," she said.

"Ah, Heaven, how great!" he muttered between his teeth. He took her hand in his; he held it for one minute, looking at it. "Good-by," he said, in a voice broken by pain. "I would to Heaven this sweet, white hand could stab me where I stand!"

"I do not," she replied.

His eyes were fixed with a burning, passionate gaze on her face—a long, lingering look that she never forgot.

"Good-by," he said; "I wish you all the happiness this world can give you."

"And that will be none without you," said Lady May.

She did not try to check her tears or her sighs. He bent down and touched her face with his lips, and the cry that came from them was like the cry of a lost soul.

"Oh, my love, my fair young love, good-by!" he said; and the next moment he had left her.

She never remembered how the time passed, until, with a dull clang that fell startlingly on the quiet air, she heard the clock strike one. He had started by that time, and she should, perhaps, never see him again.

It was Lady Lewis who aroused her; she came walking slowly down the quiet path.

"Are you here, Lady May?" she asked. "I could not find you. Where is that man of mystery?"

"Whom do you mean?" asked Lady May.

Her friend laughed.

"I mean Sir Clinton Adair. He is a man of mystery; he is like the man in the iron mask—no one can make him out."

"What has he done?" she asked, trying to speak lightly.

"He has gone away, and gone without a word to any of us."

"He left his adieux to me," she said. "He begged me to make them for him."

"Then he did not quite forget us," said Lady Lewis. "It seems strange that he should be summoned in such haste. Where has he gone?"

"He has important business in France," she replied.

"In France?" laughed Lady Lewis. "It is not often that an English baronet has such particular business in France."

Miss Lockwood was bitterly annoyed.

"I can not understand him, May. There are no secrets between us, and you say that he has never even mentioned the word marriage to you?"

"He has never, even ever so distantly, alluded to it," said Lady May.

"And yet, do you know," continued Miss Lockwood, "that I should be tempted to say he loves you better than ever. He gives me that impression. Well, men are difficult to deal with, even the best of them, and Sir Clinton is one of the best."

That was Lady May's only consolation in all the bitterness of her disappointment, in all her sorrow at parting with him. In all her long hours of bitter, dull pain, it was her consolation to remember that she had fancied he loved her better than ever.

That was the secret of his strange conduct. She should know some day, and she said to herself, no matter what it was, no matter whether he ever returned to claim her love or not, she would be true to her love—true to him until her life's end.

CHAPTER XXXV.

COMPLETELY BEWILDERED.

BEFORE evening that same day, Sir Clinton was on his way to France. He was fortunate enough to be in time for the Dover boat, and the journey was made as speedily as possible. As he left England and drew near France, the beautiful image of his fair young love seemed to fade before that of Daisy.

“You held a daisy in your hand, and you flung it away.”

Great Heaven! how fatally true the words had been. Poor, pretty, simple Daisy, who had loved him so well that she was ready to die for him! How had he repaid her sweet, simple love? How had he cherished and guarded the innocent field-flower that he had gathered for himself? How dearly she loved him! He remembered the expression of her face as she looked at him that last day, and he had hardly thought of her since.

He had written to her, at times, short letters without one word of the love that she craved for; he had told her to send her letters addressed to Mr. Clifton, care of Messrs. Cooper. She accepted what he told her in all good faith, and never asked why it was to be so. She had written to him—his conscience reproached him most bitterly as he remembered long letters, unread and unanswered. It was six months since he left her. Ah, well, there was no excuse for him, no palliation of his offense. He never delayed one hour until he reached Leville. He remembered their visit to the pretty cemetery, and Daisy's sad words. He prayed to Heaven they might not be fulfilled—that she might not be laid to sleep near the grave of the man who had died for love. His poor, pretty young wife, whose only fault was that she had loved him too well! The very wheels of the carriage, as they turned so swiftly, seemed to repeat the refrain of the quaint, simple song he had heard her singing:

“Oh, mother, mother, make my bed,
And spread the milk-white sheets.”

He remembered the plaintive voice, the tender face, and he cursed himself for his own hardness in leaving her alone so long. As the hours wore on, and he drew near to his journey's end, his fears increased; he dare not raise his face to the distant heavens and pray. He did not disguise his own sin.

“I am not worthy,” he said to himself; “no blessing from Heaven can rest upon me. I would fain pray for her if I dared.”

Would he find her living or dead? Daisy in danger of death!—the sweet, simple, child-like face thin and cold in the still, white majesty of death! It was terrible. He had but little thought for the unknown child, his son and heir.

“She never told me,” he thought to himself, with a deep sigh—

"she never told me; I suppose she thought I should not care. And this little child, whom I have never seen, is the heir of the Adairs of Eastwold."

He thought but little of the child—much of its mother. When in the far distance he saw the purple, vine-clad hills, the rich green olives, and the tall trees, he knew that he was near his home, and he sighed deeply. He was afraid. Would she be living or dead?

If she were dead, he should feel like her murderer; if living, he should be thankful.

Once more he stood in the pretty, artistic room where so many dreary months had been spent, almost a stranger in his own home. To him, as he stood there, descended a nurse, and he knew how great his fear had been when his trembling lips almost refused to speak the words:

"How is Mrs. Clifton?"

The nurse was one of those quick, ready-witted women who seem to have every sense doubled.

"This is madam's husband," she thought to herself; "and, by his agitation, he loves her."

"How is madam?" he asked.

The woman's quick, sympathetic face underwent a rapid change.

"Madam is very ill, but no doubt she will be better now that monsieur has arrived. She is always talking of monsieur."

"And—the little one?"

Another change of the expressive face.

"Thanks to Heaven! the little one is well, charming—everything that could be desired—a beautiful boy. Will monsieur see madam now?"

He followed her like one in a dream. He said to himself that it was Daisy whom he was going to see—his wife, Daisy, and his little son, the heir of Eastwold.

The room was strangely hushed; the whole house was strangely silent. He looked in eagerly. There lay the sweet face on the white pillows—sweet as ever, but wasted and wan, without the lovely bloom and the lovely dimples—a white Daisy indeed; and, as he looked at her, the same words returned to him—"You held a daisy in your hand, and flung it away."

"You will be very quiet, very tranquil, monsieur," said the sweet-voiced nurse; "any agitation would kill madam."

Yes, he would be quiet. Poor, pretty Daisy! Had he been kind to her after all? He had married her to save her life, but she was dying now. He looked at her pale, sweet face—so pale, with great dark circles round the eyes; then he started suddenly, for the sweet eyes were open and looking earnestly into his.

"Caro," whispered a faint voice—"Caro, are you come at last?"

And then, although he loved Lady May, and she who lay there was his unloved wife, Sir Clinton Adair knelt by the bedside and wept.

"Caro," whispered the sweet voice, "I have a little son—did you know?" He kissed the white hand that trembled as she tried to raise it. "Such a pretty little son. I did not tell you; I thought you would not be pleased."

He controlled his emotion, and tried to speak calmly.

"Why did you think that, Daisy?" he asked.

"Mrs. De Grey told me that husbands only loved children when they loved their wives."

"Do you imagine, then, Daisy, that I do not love you?" he asked.

"I know it," she replied, sadly; "and that was the reason I did not tell you about my little son. No matter what they said to me about trying to get well, I wished to die."

"Oh, Daisy, Daisy, you torture me!" he said.

"No, I do not mean to do that," she replied. "I suppose other women, happy wives whose husbands love them, pray to live, Caro—above all, when they have a little son—do they not?" The sweet, sad eyes were looking so earnestly at him. "I prayed to die that you might be free, for it was a mistake, Caro, that marriage of ours—such a terrible mistake. I saw how husbands loved their wives when I knew Mr. and Mrs. De Grey."

She lay still and silent for some few minutes, then she looked at him gently.

"You have been away some time, Caro—a long time. I began to think you would never return."

Heaven help him! No lash of a whip could have been harder to bear than those few words—so long away. And what had he done? How had he spent his time while his wife was fading, drooping, and dying here?

"Caro, would you not like to see my little son?"

It struck him as being so strange that she did not say "our son." Indeed, it was a peculiarity of hers that she never alluded to the child except as her own. The nurse came, carrying the little one in her arms. At first it seemed to Sir Clinton that he saw a bundle of white lawn and lace; then a light, sudden and beautiful, came over Daisy's face as she held out one feeble arm. With her own hand she uncovered the little face—a sweet, rosy, innocent holy face, charming as a pictured angel.

"This is my boy Caro," she said. "I have given him no name; I would not until you came."

Her wistful young face and wistful eyes were turned toward him; they seemed to say, "Do praise my baby." All a mother's gentle pride and gentle pleading were in those sweet, sad eyes. Sir Clinton could not resist them. The child was really beautiful, with pink, rounded limbs, and a lovely little dimpled face, with something like golden down in the place of hair. He praised him until the young mother's eyes filled with tears, and she began to sob. That was exactly opposite to the effect he had intended to produce, and it bewildered him.

"Why, Daisy, why do you cry?" he asked, with all a man's ignorance of a woman's feelings.

"I was so afraid that you would not like him," sobbed Daisy.

"Not like him! Why, how could you think so? A lovely, innocent little child like that, who could help liking him?"

"But," said Daisy, still unconvinced, "they say that his face is just like mine."

"So it is," he replied; "I can see the resemblance myself."

"And yet you like him?" said Daisy, in a kind of rapture.

"How good of you, Caro. I wish that he had been the very image of you."

Then came the nurse. Madam had talked quite long enough. She must rest now.

"One word more," said Daisy.

She tried to raise her hand and draw her husband's face down to hers, but she could not.

"I want to whisper to you, Caro," she said.

He bent down until his handsome face touched hers, but he did not kiss her—even the nurse noted that.

"Shall you go away again?" she asked, faintly.

"No," he answered; and when he spoke he meant what he said.

Then the doctor came, who saluted Mr. Clifton gravely, wondering what kind of a man this was who could go and leave so fair a wife for long months together. He did not give a very favorable report of Daisy.

"She was very weak," he said, "nervous, and low-spirited."

He did not spare monsieur, but told him how he used to come day after day, and find her always the same, weeping as though her heart would break.

"I used to tell her that she would dissolve altogether—that she was a fountain of tears. It grieved me much to see her. The color is all washed from her face, the light from her eyes, by tears. If madam should be left alone again I should recommend a female companion."

"I will see to it," said Sir Clinton, hastily. "Madam will not be left alone just yet, at least. Do you think she will recover?"

"I can not give a decision yet. I should say myself, from what I have seen of madam, that a little gleam of happiness will do more for her than all my medicine."

Sir Clinton thought to himself that she should have it, at least, if it were in his power to give it.

Then the doctor went away.

The nurse sent a message to the effect that the house was to be kept very silent, for, after long waking hours, madam had fallen into a deep, peaceful slumber.

Once more Sir Clinton Adair stood out under the stars alone. No longer a half-cloudy English sky over his head, but one so bright, so far away, gleaming with the pale, pure radiance of a thousand stars. He was completely bewildered.

He walked up and down between the rows of orange trees.

"If I were to tell my story to any one," he said, "they would think me the greatest villain under the sun; yet I have not done wrong purposely; circumstances have been against me—have drawn me into a labyrinth. No one hates sin, hates evil-doing, more than I; yet who has done worse? I did not intend it. I have gone wrong because I had not the courage to look into my love's face and tell her I had married another. I had not the courage to untwine her sweet white arms from my neck and tell her they had no place there. I have suffered since for my cowardice."

What was he to do? To write to Lady May and confess the whole truth?—tell her he had a wife and child living here in

France, throw himself on her mercy and pity, always so great, then stay away from England until it was forgotten?

That would have been the right, honest, honorable, loyal course; and for some time he felt that he would pursue it; then the temptation of his idolatrous love came over him again, and he persuaded himself that to receive such news so abruptly would kill Lady May.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A WIFE'S SUSPICIONS.

It was a long, lingering illness. More than once the doctor gave up all hopes of Daisy, believing it was quite impossible for her to recover. But she rallied after all; a faint, lovely color crept back into her beautiful face; her lips took a faint tinge of red; her eyes lost their dim, dreamy look—she was to recover.

Sir Clinton was unfeignedly thankful for it. If she had died he would have thought himself her murderer; as it was, he was grateful to Heaven for its mercy. Her recovery was long and tedious; he could not leave her even for one day. If he spent many hours away from her, on his return he was sure to find her worse, her face grown paler, and her trembling lips would say:

“Where have you been, Caro?”

He would tell her how he had spent his time, and she would reply:

“I am always so afraid of losing you again; but you will not go, will you?”

He assured her no, he would not leave her; then she would be content.

He wrote to Lady May, telling her his business in France would detain him, and left it a matter of great uncertainty when he should return. He wrote it, knowing full well that he was guilty of fraud and deceit, yet not knowing how to extricate himself from the difficulty.

After that he had but little time for writing. It was not Daisy herself who made such continual demands on him, but her nurse, who, choosing to believe monsieur a model husband, was always asking him to do something for madam. “Would he talk to madam a little—she felt melancholy and dull? Would he read to her? Would he give madam his arm while she walked across the room?” Then he found himself searching the country-side for dainties. Daisy wanted the sunniest fruits, the sweetest wines, the freshest flowers; and through it all he was patient, kind, and attentive, as though he loved her.

He could not help admiring her, when Daisy held her lovely little son in her white arms; she looked like a picture; there was a serene beauty in her face new to it—the beauty of the young mother, happy in the possession of her first child. She was so sweet, so gentle, so patient, that he grew interested in watching her. He saw that she never voluntarily made any demand on his services. Very often, when the nurse asked some little help from him, she would decline, and say, “Pray don't trouble Mr. Clifton so much.”

It was embarrassing to hear the nurse reply, smiling as she spoke.

"It is no trouble to him, madam, but a pleasure."

She herself never made any demand upon him; she seemed to shrink from giving him trouble. She would often decline his assistance, or, if she accepted it, apologize for the pain she was giving him.

"Why do you seem to think that everything I do for you is a fatigue to me, Daisy?" he asked her once.

"Is it not, Caro?"

"No; far from it; I like to wait upon you and this young heir of ours."

The words slipped from him unthinkingly. Daisy looked up with a smile.

"What is he the heir of?" she asked. "This home among the olives and vines?—it is not ours, Caro, to give him."

Then he asked himself should he tell Daisy his real name and position—tell her that the little babe lying in her arms was heir of Eastwold—a descendant of the Adairs—that he would hold his own with the noblest men in a noble land? Should he tell this to his gentle, lovely, young wife?

No, he decided; he would speak of his affairs to no one until they had been told frankly to Lady May; his marriage should be kept secret until she knew it. When Daisy was quite well—well enough for him to leave her—he would return to England, and then, driven to bay, he would confess all to Lady May. He knew now how she would receive his confession—he could see the shadow fall over her beautiful face. She would say good-by to him forever; they could not be friends; he loved her, she loved him, too well for mere friendship; they would live as strangers; but long as she did live, he knew she would be true and faithful to him.

"I have wrecked her life as well as my own," he said aloud, forgetting Daisy's quiet presence.

She looked up at him.

"Whose life have you wrecked, Caro? Are you speaking of me?" she replied, quietly.

"No," was the hurried reply. "I was merely thinking aloud."

"But have you wrecked any one's life?" she asked, with straightforward, earnest gravity.

"No, no; it is but a figure of speech—a quotation, Daisy; it means nothing."

"It has a terrible sound, even if it be without meaning. You have not wrecked my life, Caro; you meant to make me happy when you married me."

"And have I not succeeded?" he asked, gently. "Are you not happy, Daisy?"

"In one way," she replied. "My little boy makes you happy; but you do not love me, Caro, and I have found it out."

"Why should you say that I do not love you? Have I ever shown you anything except kindness, Daisy?"

"No; but kindness is not love. I have read of love that had little kindness in it; I have known kindness that had no love. I am kind to Bedina, because she is a faithful servant; you are kind to me."

He looked at her wonderingly. Surely a new life was coming to his simple, field Daisy. Here were sentiments and ideas with which he had not even imagined her to be acquainted.

"Daisy," he said, curiously, "tell me, how did you, first of all, come to think that I did not love you?"

She looked at him wistfully, as though thinking whether he would contradict it; then she said:

"I have watched other people. At first—that is, when we were first married—I thought you loved me, and I believed that you had married me for love."

"And afterward?" he said, finding that she paused.

"Afterward I read a great deal about love; and I found that yours for me was not like anything that was in books. In books, all true love is careful and continuous. Then we met the De Greys. Now, Mr. De Grey loves his wife very much indeed. I watched him and watched you; I compared the two; there was a terrible difference."

He looked up in an amused sort of way, as though she were speaking of some third person in whom he was but slightly interested.

"What was the difference?" he asked.

"It showed itself in a thousand different ways," she replied, her pale, sweet face flushing and her lips trembling. "He used to kiss her when he went out and when he came in."

He could not resist a smile at this *naïve* remark.

"Have I never kissed you, Daisy?" he asked.

"Not that I remember. Yes, I think you did when you were going away; but it was just such a kiss as you would give baby here, not such as a husband gives to the wife he loves."

"But, Daisy, who has taught you all this?" he asked.

"Love is a quick teacher," she replied. "I have had no other."

Her face was patient, so resigned, her voice so sad, that he could not smile again.

"You bring a terrible array of evidence against me, Daisy," he said—"terrible!"

"The worst part about it is its perfect truth," she replied. "If I had imagined or exaggerated, it would be quite different. You know, Caro," she continued, "I have been so many long months alone, I have had time to think over all these things. Two questions have especially puzzled me."

"What are they?" he asked, quickly.

"The first is, why you married me? The second is, whether you have ever cared for any one else?"

"And what conclusion has my pretty little wife arrived at?" he asked.

"None at all, Caro. If you did not love me, why did you marry me? I had no money, no influence, nothing that gentlemen like you value."

"You will not deny that you had once a very pretty face, Daisy?" he said, lightly.

She looked pitifully at him.

"You have seen prettier," she said. "You called me a field-daisy once—you have seen far more brilliant flowers. It could not have been for my beauty."

"Men generally marry for one of those things," he said, "either for beauty, for love, or for money."

"It was not for either of the three that you married me," said Daisy, gently. "What could have tempted you, I wonder? You would marry me. I remember my surprise and wonder quite as vividly as I remember my delight."

"You were delighted, then, Daisy?"

"Yes, certainly I was; but it is useless."

"I will tell you what is even more useless, Daisy, when people are married—speculating as to what they married for."

"But you do not love me, Caro," she said, "and that makes me wonder."

They sat in silence some little time, then she looked up at him with the eagerness of a child.

"Caro," she said, "should you be angry with me if I asked a favor from you?"

"No; I should be pleased to grant it," he replied, quickly.

"I want my mother to come and live with me," she said. "You see, it is very dull for me. Nurse is going; I can not talk to Bedina, and I have no one to speak to."

"Why, Daisy, you have me—I am here," he said, surprised.

"But you do not care for my conversation. Ah, Caro, Caro, do you think that I am blind, dear? How often, even when I am speaking to you, a distant, far-off look comes in your eyes. And then I know that your thoughts are far from me. You smile and answer at random; you do not hear one half that I say."

"At least, I hear every word now, Daisy."

"Yes, because you are paying attention. I should like my mother to live here. I want some one to whom I could talk about my baby."

"Can you not talk to me about him?"

"No," replied Daisy, frankly, "I can not, because I have a certain feeling that you are not really interested—that you only pretend to listen. Then your twisting round my baby seems to me the very pivot on which the whole world turns. And do you know what you have done—not once, but many times?"

"No; I must plead guilty. Have I been very remiss?"

"You will be the best judge of that. You have spoken of baby as though he were a little girl—you have said 'her' instead of 'him,' 'she,' instead of 'he.' Now, I think," said Daisy, with sudden gravity and sudden dignity—"I think that there must be something very wrong when a man forgets his own child."

Sir Clinton laughed—he could not help it; but his eyes drooped before the tender, earnest gaze of the young mother, so brave in the defense of her child.

"Then," resumed Daisy, her fair head bending over the little one in her arms—"then I am like all other mothers, very proud of my darling, and I want some one to help me admire him. I open the little dimpled hand, and there is no one for me to show it to; when he looks fair and placid, I can not say to any one, 'Come and see how lovely baby looks.'"

"The fact is," said Sir Clinton, "you want a baby-worshiper, Daisy."

"I want a baby-lover," she replied; and her husband laughed good-humoredly.

"You shall have your wish and desire, Daisy; after all, it is a very natural one. You shall have your mother to live with you. Will it make you happier?"

"Yes, much happier," she replied.

"Then it shall be done. I would do anything in the world to make you happy, Daisy."

"That I believe," she said.

"Why do you speak in that peculiar tone, then?" he asked.

"Because," she replied, "you are good to me; you will give me kindness, you will give me happiness; because you can not give me love."

And the words were so perfectly true that they struck him with wonder. She was growing quite clever—this simple field-daisy of his.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"I WILL FIND HER OUT."

ANOTHER month, and Daisy was getting well; she could go out now, and the sweet breath of the perfumed air brought a faint color to her sweet face. But the Daisy who walked with a thoughtful face over the vine-clad hills was no longer the simple, sweet girl who accepted her husband as a hero, and thought he could do no wrong.

The birth of the little child seemed to have quickened her every sense, her every instinct. Things that she had passed over before, as a matter of course, now became of great moment to her.

"For the boy's sake," became the one great motive of her life. For his sake she longed to know more.

When she thought over this past of hers, it seemed very mysterious. Why had he married her? Why had he left her? Why had he remained so long away? For whole hours together Daisy would wander over the hills, asking herself these questions, and quite unable to give herself any answer. "The boy" made her valiant. She would submit to no wrong for his sake. If she had been alone, she would have drooped and died; her mother-love made her courageous. She would understand more—know more of her husband, and what he meant.

He must have loved her, or he would not have asked her to be his wife. What had happened since their marriage? She could remember nothing that she had done. She had been kind, faithful, and tender. She asked herself why had he brought her to this lonely, out-of-the-way spot? Did he intend to spend the whole of her life here, and never to know more of him or his affairs than she knew now?—never to see his friends, never to enter into his life, but to live among these purple, fragrant hills until she died?

It could not be. A wife was entitled to share in her husband's life, to know his friends, to understand his affairs. She did not even know the source from which his income was derived. For the boy's sake, matters must be placed on a very different footing. But

the question that troubled her more than any other was, had he, since he married her, learned to care for any one else? What had kept him so long away from her? She must find out.

She devoted herself to that task—it was not a very difficult one. It was easy to see from his absorbed manner, from his fits of deep thought and abstraction, that his mind was elsewhere; and once—Daisy never forgot that hour; it was the early dawn of the morning, and she was frightened—there was an unusual noise in the house, and she fancied some one was breaking into it. Hastily throwing on a dressing-gown, she went to her husband's room to arouse him. Even in the midst of her fear she could not help watching him as he slept—the handsome, haggard face, with its deep lines of pain. She touched him lightly, speaking in a whisper. Suddenly his face lighted up.

“My love! my love!” he cried. “Oh, how I have missed you!”

Then his dazed, half-waking eyes fell on the face of Daisy. His voice changed to a tone of cold, indifferent surprise.

“Is that you, Daisy? You startled me.”

She was a warm-hearted, impetuous woman, this sweet Daisy, and she felt very much inclined to throw down the taper she held in her hands and stamp her little feet on the ground.

What did he mean? Who was his love—his love?—on whom he had called in a voice like sweetest music—in a voice that even on their wedding-day he had never used to her?

“My love! my love! Oh, how I have missed you!”

He had not missed her; she was there with him. Of whom was he speaking? She did not even know that his voice could take such loving, tender tones; and, as all these thoughts passed through her mind, she stood still, looking fixedly at him, forgetting everything else in this one wonder.

“Why are you looking at me so, Daisy?” he asked. “What is the matter?”

She had forgotten the fancied noise, the house-breakers, and all else; his words *seemed* to rouse her.

“What do I want?” she repeated, with the vacant air of one who had forgotten her message. “I came to tell you that—that I heard a strange noise, and I fear there are thieves in the house.”

“You have not hurried on your mission, Daisy,” he said, with a good-tempered laugh; “they have had time to get in while you have been looking at me.”

“You amazed me,” she said, in her earnest, straightforward way. “Do you know what you said before you were quite awake?”

“No,” he replied; “that I certainly do not.”

She told him, still keeping her unchanging eyes on his face.

“Caro,” she asked, “*who is* this love whom you have missed so terribly?”

“My dear Daisy,” he said, “is a man accountable for what he says in his sleep—for his dreams?”

“Were you dreaming?” asked earnest Daisy.

“I suppose I must have been,” he replied, with an uneasy laugh.

“Then, Caro, I would rather be the one you love in your dreams than the one you love in your waking hours. It seems to me the dream-love has the best of it.”

When Sir Clinton examined into the cause of the noise, it was discovered to be nothing more than the bursting of a bottle of champagne; but the incident did not pass from Daisy's mind. He had a love, or he could not dream of her; that it was not herself, the difference in his voice when he spoke of his love and then to Daisy was quite sufficient to show her, even if nothing else did. Then, if he had another love, why had he married her?

She was more puzzled than ever. Another time Sir Clinton had been unwell for some days; he had a kind of low fever, caught through the heat and the enervating weather. He refused to call in a doctor, declaring that he could cure himself. The fever made him low and desponding, at times a little disposed to ramble in his speech. There was nothing to cause alarm, or even to confine him to his room, and Daisy put aside all her doubts and her fears to devote herself to him. She read to him one morning from the book of Irish ballads he liked so much; she was called away, and left it in his hands. She was absent some little time. When she returned, he had lain his face on the book and had fallen into a deep sleep. She raised his head, and found the page wet with tears. Then she looked at what he had been reading. It was the same ballad that had touched him so much before—

“I am weary, I am weary,
Waiting for the May.”

It was evident to her that he had read it, wept over it, and fallen asleep with the tears still wet on his face. What could it mean? She felt quite sure that, in some way or other, the words were an allegory. It was not for the merry month of May that her husband sighed. Then it flashed suddenly across her that, just as she was called by the name of a flower, “Daisy,” other people were called by name “May.”

The thought flashed on her mind with a jealous pang, that showed her how dearly she loved this husband who did not love her. She said the word over and over again, “May.” Why, it had the sweetest sound!

“Ah, me! If he loved a May, why has he married me?” she thought.

When he was awake and looking a little better, she, sitting by his side, raised her eyes suddenly to his.

“Caro,” she said, “is the name of May a common one in England?”

He was so completely taken by surprise, that he let the book he held in his hand fall to the ground.

“I do not know—I am no judge of names,” he said, as he turned away, and then, with slow steps, quitted the room.

“I am not jealous,” said Daisy, “but that is confirmation strong enough for anything. He can not even endure the sound of the name.”

From that hour her unhappiness deepened—also her determination to know the truth. Was there some one in that far-off England whom he loved—some one who had taken his heart from her?

“It is a great shame,” said simple Daisy. “I am his wife, and he ought to love me better than any one else on earth. I will find

her out. It is worse than being a thief to take a man's heart and his love from his own wife. I will find her out, and, when I know her, I shall say:

"This is my husband; he has married me; he has promised to love me and to care for me—why do you seek to take him from me?"

"If she has any good in her," thought the girl, sadly, "that will make her ashamed of herself. I shall say to her:

"You would not steal my money, my wedding-ring; why steal from me that which I value a thousand times more than life itself?" I shall know what to say to her, if I ever find her."

Another time Daisy went to her husband's study to find some paper he had mislaid, and on his desk, hardly dried, lay a copy of verses. She read them—such passionate, despairing verses, that they brought tears to her tender eyes; and she was so deeply engrossed in reading them that she forgot the object she was in search of. A shadow falling over the page roused her, and she looked up, her eyes filled with tears.

"Caro," she said, "did you—have you written these verses?"

He laughed awkwardly.

"I shall begin to fancy myself a poet, Daisy, if I find you crying over my rhymes," he said.

"But you did write them—they are your own?"

"Yes; such as they are, they are my own," he replied.

"Caro," she said, very gravely, "I wish, not that you would write such verses to me, but that I knew to whom they were written."

"As though poets ever wrote with reason," he said, laughingly.

"This is written with reason; it is written to some one whom you love very much, and from whom you are parted."

"It is a waste of time to contradict ladies," he said.

"And in your case it would also be a waste of truth," she retorted. "They are beautiful verses—sad, passionate, sweet verses. I shall never forget them; but I wish that I had never seen them, Caro."

She walked away as she spoke, and Sir Clinton looked after her. He was positively growing interested in her, this sweet, petulant, impulsive Daisy, who said what she thought, and whose thoughts were strangely true. Her character began to interest him. He had only thought of her as a simple, loving girl, tender and pure of heart, earnest of purpose; but she was growing positively piquant. She loved him, and she was jealous of him; yet, knowing nothing of his history, it was only of a shadow that she was jealous.

"If I had known her first—if I had never seen May," he thought to himself, "I should have loved Daisy."

And from that time, although he had no idea of loving her, from that hour Sir Clinton Adair felt a great respect for his wife. Daisy had quite recovered from her illness now; she had never been so well or so beautiful. He heard her singing all day long to the boy, he heard her laugh and talk to him as though he could understand, and he began to perceive that when he entered the room where mother and child were, the sweet song and laughter were hushed, the playful young mother became dignified. He noticed, too, that after a time Daisy ceased to enumerate baby's charms and wonders

to him. Once he stole in gently while she was dressing the little one.

"No one writes verses to us, do they, my darling?" she was saying; "no one writes sad, sweet, loving words to us."

And he stole away again when he saw that tears fell from her eyes on baby's unconscious face.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A COOL FAREWELL.

THE fever of unrest was on him. Daisy was well now, the child thriving—everything at rest, and the old fever had returned to him. There could be no more tranquillity—the old, haunting, passionate love, the longing to look on the face of his love, was all back again. He wandered to and fro like a ghost. There were times when he raised his face drearily to the summer heavens, asking why this curse of a passionate love had fallen on him?—why his life, more than that of other men, should be haunted by this fierce, mad love? He was like a ship without a helm; he seemed to have lost the art of governing himself; the distinction between right and wrong had, in some measure, faded from his mind; he was growing careless of honor, and loyalty, and good faith; he followed one phantom—it was the weird one of his love. When ladies, forgetting the law of honesty, steal, society is kind enough to call their sin by the name of kleptomania; when a man, in ungovernable rage, murders another, insanity comes to the rescue; for all sin excuses are found and fine words chosen. If there could be any excuse for Sir Clinton Adair, it was that his passionate love had driven him mad—he was not himself. He had loved her so deeply, so madly, his disappointment had been so great, he had suffered so much, it was no wonder that the delicate balance of brain and reason was disturbed. It, before Heaven or man, there was any excuse for his sin, it lay in the fact that his love and his sorrow had dazed him. Strongly as the fit of mania returns to the unhappy lunatic, strongly as the excess of delirium returns to the fever patient, the fever of his love returned to him. He made some little stand against it; he tried to think of the words duty and honor; he tried to think of wife and child; but they were faint efforts, that fell dead—he must see her again.

He said no more than that to himself. He never imagined what he was to say to her, how he was to greet her, what excuse he was to make for his absence, what explanation of his conduct; only to see her, to look on the face that made his heaven on earth, then die, if it should be so!

"Was it ever given to man to love as I love her?" he thought, and he remembered the beautiful story of Jacob and Rebecca—how he loved her, how he worked for her, so that the long years seemed but as one day. He would have worked so for Lady May. He bit his lips and clinched his hands as he remembered that he himself had placed a barrier between himself and his fair young love. Still, he must see her. His wife's sweet, sad face, her tender voice, his

child's infant loveliness, the good impulses of his own heart—all were as nothing to him; he must see her!

"When I was a boy," he thought to himself, "I wondered at the love stories of old. I could not imagine that a woman's fair face had led to a thirty years' war—I could not understand the wailing of CEnone for her lost Paris; but now I understand—I would wage war for twice thirty years if I could win my Helen in the end."

He must see her! He closed his eyes to rest, and, as of old, she was there before him; he opened them, only to have her resemblance in everything he saw. He had reached that state when nothing but the sight of her voice would quiet and soothe him. He must go! Even Daisy, whose heart was filled with the anguish of slighted love and the fire of jealousy—even she, the unloved, neglected wife, pitied him. He wandered like a ghost to and fro; his handsome face had grown haggard and pale; he could not eat, sleep, or rest; his eyes had a sad, far-off look; his voice had lost its ring. The day came when Daisy herself noticed how ill he was, and spoke to him about it.

"You are right," he said; "the place does not suit me, Daisy; it is too warm, too enervating—the cold of the English air suits me better. I think I shall go to England, and make arrangements for your coming."

"The air of Leville suits the little one," she said; "he is not very strong, and the doctor said the other day it would be as well if we could keep him in the south of France for a time at least."

Sir Clinton looked up with an air of relief.

"You had better remain here," he said, "for another year or so; you will not be lonely with your mother and the boy."

Her heart beat with a sudden, fierce pang of jealousy. He wanted to be away from her; he wanted to go back to England without her; he cared nothing for her child and herself. She controlled herself by a great effort.

"You would like to go back to England, then," she said, "without me?"

"For a time," he replied, "a short time. If Leville suits the boy, there is no need to take him away from it."

"And you?" she said; "shall you be able to do without me?"

He looked up absently, not quite understanding what she meant.

"Shall you not miss me, Caro, and want me with you?" she asked.

"Oh, yes, of course," he replied, with the most careless indifference; "but that will not matter, you know."

"Certainly not," promptly replied Daisy, in a voice of bitter pain. Both pain and bitterness passed unnoticed by him.

"I shall start soon," he said. Now that the ice was broken, he was all impatience to be gone. "And, Daisy, I will take a courier home with me to bring your mother back."

"I thank you," she replied. "And, of course, you have no idea when you shall return?"

"No, not the least; but if your mother is here, you will find the time pass very pleasantly. You must be sure to send to me in England for anything you want."

"I shall want nothing," replied Daisy stiffly.

"You will send your letters to the same address—'Mr Clifton, care of Messrs. Cooper, Thavies Inn.'"

Daisy looked up in his face.

"I thought," she said "that even the poorest people in England had homes of their own"

"So they have," he replied, unguardedly.

"Then where is yours? Why must I not write there?—why must I send to the care of some one else?"

"Why, Daisy," he cried, amused at her vehemence, "you are growing quite curious."

"Do you call it curiosity when a wife asks where her husband's home is?"

He looked up impatiently.

"I do not know what has come to you," he said, and he had never spoken so harshly to her before. "I do not know you, Daisy; you are not like yourself; you tease me; you ask questions; you seem dissatisfied."

She looked up at him with a pale, scared face.

"Are you really angry with me, Caro?" she asked.

"I do not like to be teased," he said. "I am not patient, Daisy."

"And I have been too patient," she replied.

Sir Clinton frowned angrily and left the room.

Daisy sought refuge in a burst of tears.

"I will not bear it," she said. "I am not a child, and I will not be treated like one. I will know more of his affairs than I have ever done. I will know why he goes to England and leaves me here."

A project suddenly presented itself to her, and afterward took deep root in her mind. She, his wife, was amply justified in wanting to know more of him; it was not, she said to herself, mere curiosity; it was not a woman's idle desire to know—it was real, deep, true interest in him, real love for him, that prompted her. She would let him go to England without another word; and then, when her mother came, so that she could leave her boy in safety, she would go after him.

There was only one objection to her plan. Where in England would she find him? He had, apparently, no home; but she could hear of him at Messrs. Cooper's. She did not know much of life; she had seen little of the world, and her plan appeared to her not only feasible, but easy. She would go to London; the journey need not frighten her, it was straightforward; she would go to the address; she remembered it well—Messrs. Cooper, Thavies Inn; then she had nothing to do but ask for Mr. Clifton. If there was any mystery, anything underhand in his life, he would surely tell her then, when he found that she had followed him to England for the sake of knowing it.

So Daisy laid her plans, resolute, determined, not for her own sake, but for her boy's. He might have neglected her, he must not neglect the loveliest child that ever saw light. She made up her mind to this plan of action, and nothing would alter it.

Perhaps Sir Clinton felt some little wonder that Daisy said no more against his going. This gentle yet impulsive wife of his had some interest for him, but it was more as a student of character

than anything else. She piqued him. He had looked upon her as having fine characteristics—a fair, blank page on which he could inscribe what colors he would, but he found the fair page not quite so blank as he had expected; she had improved so wonderfully. She had thoughts and aspirations of her own now; she had ideas that were original and not to be despised. He could not ignore Daisy any longer; she had an individuality of her own, and he began to perceive it.

Still, he wondered why she made no comments on his journey—why she did not ask him how long he would be absent; but no, Daisy made no sign. She busied herself in preparing his packages; she helped him, but the smile that had been wont to come so sweetly at his words was absent. Daisy was grave and earnest.

“Shall you think of the baby while you are away?” she asked him one day, and he saw a wistful expression on her face.

“Most assuredly I shall, Daisy.”

“I thought, if you liked, if you cared about it, I would take him to the town and have his portrait taken for you.”

Sir Clinton laughed.

“Why, Daisy, all babies look alike in pictures. I do not suppose that, if I saw half a dozen baby portraits, I should know which was my son.”

“Probably not,” said Daisy, with a toss of her pretty head; “but I should know him, because I love him.”

“So do I; you will see when he is a little older, Daisy. Men can not care so much for these very little children; when he can walk and talk, that will be the time for me to love him.”

“If you go often to England,” retorted Daisy, “and your visits last each time as long as they have done before, he will be a young man before you see him.”

“Why, Daisy, you are satirical,” said Sir Clinton.

“And that,” replied Daisy, “is a thousand times better than being sentimental. How long will it be before my mother reaches Leville, Caro?”

“I shall go first to Ferndale,” he replied, “before I go to London or anywhere else, and, as soon as I can persuade her to go, I will see that she starts.”

“You will be kind to her?” said Daisy. “She has never traveled before; she will be frightened and nervous.”

“Of course I shall be kind to her, Daisy; what do you take me for?” he said, half indignantly; and then the subject was not mentioned between them again.

He saw a difference in her when he left home. The time before she had stood at the gate watching him with loving, lingering eyes, and, when he had gone, had fallen lifeless to the ground; this time the pretty face was flushed with indignation—the fire, half of anger, half of jealousy, was in her eyes.

“Good-by,” she said, coldly, when Sir Clinton was going.

“Daisy,” he said, wonderingly, “that is a cool farewell, unlike you.”

“I can not make myself cool and warm to order,” retorted Daisy; “I do my best.”

But though she spoke so coldly to him, though she bade him fare-

well with cold words and averted eyes, she had never loved him with so passionate a love as now.

And Sir Clinton, as he traveled homeward, forgot all about those he had left behind, and thought only of the one he was going to see.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

READY TO START.

SIR CLINTON had kept his word. Immediately on his arrival in England he had gone to Ferndale and had seen Mrs. Erne. He told her of Daisy's wish that she should go to her. At first she had refused. She was too old for travel—too old for change; she should not know what to do in a strange country, foreign ways would kill her, and she would not hear a word of it; but when Sir Clinton told her about the beauty of the little grandchild, and artfully placed before her the fact that he believed Daisy wanted advice in bringing up the child, that sort of instinct which never quite dies in woman woke up, and she declared herself in readiness to set out.

She was slightly alarmed at the sight of the French courier, with his long beard and mustache, whose ideas of the English language were of the most extraordinary description. Poor Mrs. Erne trembled at him, but his respect for her was so great, his salutations so profound, his desire to please her so very evident, that she said "he meant well, she was sure," and finally she consented to intrust her precious person to his care. It was a relief to Sir Clinton when she went; he fancied Daisy would be quite happy now, and in that he showed a man's usual discrimination and correct judgment. When he had seen Mrs. Erne safely off, Sir Clinton went to London, and there the desire of his heart was gratified. The London season had hardly begun, but a brilliant one was expected, and, from the inquiries made at Cliffe House, he heard that Miss Lockwood and Lady May were expected in a few days' time.

Sir Clinton took up his abode at Ferndale House, and announced his determination of remaining for three months, at least.

People said to each other, smilingly, that there would be a wedding long before that time, for he must have returned to marry Lady May Trevlyn.

While he went through his old torture again and again, Daisy was making up her mind to a grand "coup." Time had done wonders for her, not only in maturing her beauty, but in forming her mind. She had been a simple, untutored girl at the time of her marriage, with only one idea, which was how she could best show her love for her husband; now she was a woman with a purpose. Time and sorrow had given her a dignity and matured her as years alone could never have done.

She had thought and brooded long weeks and months over the strangeness of her husband's conduct, until she had lost all interest in everything else; she had graver and more serious thoughts than such as generally fill the minds of young girls.

"They had each a life to live, and if they intended to strive for Heaven," she said to herself, "it must be a good life—it should be

filled with good and useful deeds; taken even at the worst, it was never intended that life should be spent shut up in the solitude of these hills, simply hidden out of the way, seeing no one, knowing no one—eating, drinking, sleeping, walking, living in isolated luxury, without one share in the great heart of the world, its conflicts, its dangers, its trials, its heroisms. Life like that was not far removed from vegetation. God had never created them for this.”

What made the difference between their married life and the life of others? Even Jules Sernay, the courier, had hesitated a little before trusting himself in “perfidious Albion.”

“His wife,” he said, “did not care about his going such long distances.” Why, her husband had not cared in the least about the distance; he had voluntarily left her—had voluntarily absented himself from her. Even old Philippa, the owner of the vineyard that half covered one of the hills, had refused to go to Spain on very profitable business—he would not leave his wife. Besides, in all the books she read, in the poems that she knew by heart, in the stories that she knew were true, there was no love so beautiful, so dignified, so tender, as the love between husband and wife. There must be something that was wanting in her life—something that made it different to all others. It was not want of love on her part; it must be her husband’s want of love for her. Between them there had been no graceful, kindly familiarity; she had never loved—at least, had never liked—to throw her arms round her husband’s neck and kiss his face; she never jested or laughed with him; instead of that, she had watched him through dreary hours of brooding pain, when his haggard face and darkened eyes showed her that his thoughts were all sad ones.

What made it so? Why did he not love her? She was not vain, this simple Daisy, but she felt sure that since her marriage she had wonderfully improved; her mirror showed her a beautiful face, fresh and fair—a charming English face; and she quite calmly, without the least vanity, took stock, as it were, of her own charms and accomplishments. They were not great—nothing very wonderful; but, on the other hand, she was more accomplished than half the women of the day.

Then, said Daisy to herself, she would solve the mystery. She had thought, perhaps, the birth of the little boy would fill his heart with love, and turn it to her; it had not done so. He was kind to the baby—evinced some little interest in it; but love it—as, for instance, Mr. De Grey would have loved a child of his own—nothing of the kind. So, after long, deep thought, after much consideration, Daisy resolved upon taking the matter in her own hands, and solving the mystery. If she found that he loved some one else, what should she do? Her sweet face flushed; her little white hands clinched themselves tightly together; her heart beat with hot, angry pain. What should she do?

“Ah, me! how hopeless and how helpless I am, after all! What could I do?”

But, after long deliberation, Daisy almost banished that idea. If he had really loved any one else, he would not have married her; there was neither sense nor reason in supposing such a thing.

No; the mystery did not lie in his love for another, but in some

mystery of life; perhaps, if she could solve that and help him, he would love her with all his heart—so she would try. She said no word to any one of her plans, but she laid them carefully. She had a large sum of money by her, and, by sending to her husband she could have more—she would have plenty to keep her for a whole year in London, if it were needful; and, when her mother came to take care of the boy, she would certainly go. It was hard to leave the child, but then it was for his sake.

Mrs. Erne, under the charge of the bearded courier, arrived at last. To hear her account of the journey was simply to listen to a relation of marvels—no one had ever gone through such dangers and such hair-breadth escapes. It was not until Mrs. Erne had exhausted all these that she looked round her to see how the land lay, according to her own expression, with her daughter. She was a simple, kindly woman, who knew very little of the world, or what is commonly called life; but she knew this much, at least, that when a man loves his wife, he does not, of his own free will, leave her.

“What takes your husband to England without you, child?” she never wearied of asking Daisy; and the unloved wife had no reply to make, except that it was business. But when the mother saw how changed her child was, how all the light, bright spirit had left her—that she had changed from a tender, loving girl to an earnest, high-souled woman—she marveled what had wrought the difference.

“Are you happy with your husband, Daisy?” she would ask.

Yes, she was happy—she made no complaint; but the mother’s quick eyes saw it all. If she were happy, as she said, why did she spend hours in weary thought? Why was she always waking with the morning dawn, yet sitting up until midnight? Why did she never laugh, but when the child wanted amusement? Why was she more often seen with tears in her eyes than with smiles on her lips? Where was the pretty, girlish talk about her husband, such as young wives always delight in? Where were her lamentations over his absence—her longing for his return?

“There is something not natural about it,” said Mrs. Erne. “I am afraid my child is not happy.”

There came a day when Daisy sought her mother’s presence, and in some vague fashion made known to her her plans. Mrs. Erne listened in wonder.

“Let me quite understand, Daisy. You want me to take charge of the baby, the house, and Bedina, while you go to England—is it so?”

“Yes, mother, that is it,” replied Daisy.

“And again,” said Mrs. Erne, “if I understand rightly, you do not want your husband to know anything about your journey?”

“No; I want to take it quite unknown to him,” said Daisy—“unknown to any one except you, mother.”

“How shall you do over your letters?” she asked; “your husband seems to write pretty often to you.”

“I have thought all that over, mother. My husband’s letters never contain anything that require answering—they might be read by all the world, as well as by me. I never have anything to say to him of particular import. I shall leave twelve letters behind me, dated in advance; one to be posted each month, so that he will never

know that I am not here. Then, as soon as I have decided upon an address in London, I shall send it to you. You can forward all my husband's letters, and I can answer anything that requires answering, send the letters to you, and you can send them on to him."

"That might do," said Mrs. Erne; "but suppose he returns while you are away?"

"He will not," said Daisy; "and if he does, he will not be very much surprised."

"Daisy, my own!" said the simple woman, "are you quite sure that you are doing nothing wrong?"

"I am quite sure," was the grave reply. "I am doing what is right and needful."

"Do tell me," said her mother, anxiously, "is there anything wrong about your husband?"

"No," replied Daisy; "be quite easy, mother; the errand I am going on will make us all happier."

Mrs. Erne had no resource but to believe it. And Daisy began her preparations for departure. In the intensity of her love and anxiety over her husband, she had not taken sufficiently into account the grief that it would cause her to part from her child. When the day came that she was ready to start, and she took the little one in her arms, it seemed to her that her heart would break.

"Mother," she said, simply, "did it hurt you as much to part with me?"

Mrs. Erne smiled sadly.

"There is this difference, Daisy," she said, "your heart had gone from me—your husband had all of it."

"And, some day," thought Daisy, "this boy's heart will go from me. Ah, well, it is the way of the world, mother."

"Yes," she replied, sadly, "it is the way of the world. No matter how soft and how warm a bird makes its nest, Daisy, the young ones will fly from it; but you need have no fear over the boy; I will take as much care of him as I did of you."

"Bedina can speak enough English for you to understand her, mother," said Daisy, anxious to make all things smooth.

Mrs. Erne's face was expressive of the highest disdain, but she replied, quite calmly:

"I shall be able to get what I want for myself, my dear; that person, Bedina, as you call her, is, I must freely own, rather too much for me."

CHAPTER XL.

A HOUSEKEEPER WANTED.

DAISY had a safe journey. She had been very wise in one thing; she had not incumbered herself with luggage. She had plenty of money, and it seemed to her that it would be easier to purchase what she required—that is, if she did require anything—than to incumber herself with boxes. She had but a faint idea of what end or aim she proposed to herself in going to England, except that she wished to find her husband, and find out what the mystery of his life was.

Daisy was a woman of purpose; she had brooded so long over her

thoughts that she seemed to herself to be all thought. The outer world was generally quite forgotten. She had no idea what a fair and attractive picture she made, as she sat with a far-off gaze in her beautiful eyes, as indifferent to all outward events and matters as though she had no share in them. She went where she was told quite mechanically; she asked few questions, spoke few words. She looked almost like a woman whose heart and soul had traveled before her, and whose body was trying to overtake them. She reached London at night, and slept at the hotel nearest the station—slept well and soundly, for Daisy, as a rule, had almost perfect health; one part of her anxiety was over, she had reached London safely, and it seemed to her that the one-half of her errand was accomplished.

Then, when morning came, Daisy woke strong and resolute, ready to begin her task at once. She took her breakfast, then dressed herself plainly in black, hiding the fair freshness of her face with a veil, and started for the Messrs. Cooper.

Daisy had never known much of life in London. She was quite ignorant; and, in common with many country people, she imagined Thavies Inn to be a large hotel; it must be a respectable one, she thought, if lawyers like the Messrs. Cooper lived there. Daisy walked from the hotel to the nearest cab-stand, and looked with awe at the dignified gentleman who answered to the name of Cabby.

"Where to, miss?" asked that mighty official, touching his hat.

Daisy raised her sweet, sad, and wet eyes to his face.

"Do you know a hotel called Thavies Inn?" she asked.

A broad grin was the first reply, then a chuckle; after that the man asked if he might make bold enough to inquire whom she wanted there; and Daisy told him. Then he entered into an explanation, and told her Thavies Inn was not a hotel, but a block of buildings chiefly used by professional men.

"It is strange," said Daisy, "that it should be called an inn!"

It would have been stranger still if, after that, Daisy had not been a victim. The cabman evidently thought such prey must have been sent for a lawful purpose, and he smiled benignly as he asked exactly five times the fare. Perhaps his conscience—always provided that cabmen have a conscience—was touched when Daisy unhesitatingly placed the fare in his hands and thanked him for his kindness. He even volunteered then to find out at what number Messrs. Cooper were to be found. He came back in a few minutes.

"It is all right, miss," he said; "you will find them at Nos. 3 and 4." He looked after the tall, slender figure. "I have not seen a prettier girl than that for many long days," he mused as he drove away.

Nos. 3 and 4 was a tall, dark-looking house. Daisy, with her memory of the far-off vine-covered hills, wondered how any one could live there. The noise bewildered her—the gloom distracted her—the windows seemed all alike, with wire blinds, each one bearing a name. She took courage at last, and, looking at the door-post, saw the name of Messrs. Cooper, No. 3. Then she was at the right place, after all.

Then, for the first time, it occurred to Daisy, what was she to say when she stood in the presence of Messrs. Cooper? What could she say? She had hardly taken that awkward preliminary into

consideration. She must ask for Mr. Clifton's address, of course. She must say that, wishing to see him, and knowing they were his solicitors, she had inquired. Daisy took heart. But it seemed to her a strange place; the floor was covered with a cocoanut matting; she saw steep staircases, and people seemed to pass up and down incessantly. At length she asked a kindly-looking elderly man to show her Messrs. Cooper's rooms.

"They have the whole of the first floor," he replied; "the first and second rooms are occupied by their clerks; the gentlemen of the firm have the inner room."

Daisy knocked, and a sing-song voice bade her enter.

"I want to see Mr. Cooper," said Daisy, gently.

"Which of them? Mr. Paul is here—Mr. John seldom comes."

"Mr. Paul will do," said Daisy, so timidly that the clerk said to himself at once that she was certainly not a profitable client—they used quite another tone of voice; probably some one begging for charitable purposes; he should be in sore disgrace if she were admitted.

"I beg your pardon, miss," he said, "but Mr. Cooper himself is engaged. Can I take the message?"

Daisy thought deeply for a minute. What could it matter?—she had no desire to see Mr. Paul Cooper; she only wanted her husband's address—the clerk was quite as likely to have it.

"You can do quite as well," she said; "I want to know Mr. Clifton's address."

"Mr. Clifton?" repeated the clerk; "I do not remember the name. Is he employed here, or is he—"

Daisy interrupted him.

"No," she replied; "Messrs. Cooper are his solicitors."

"They are solicitors for a great many people," replied the clerk, gravely; "but I doubt if they know the address of one half their clients."

"But this is different," said Daisy, eagerly; "Mr. Clifton is not a client in that sense of the word—at least I think not; I have never heard him speak of business, but Messrs. Cooper manage all his affairs—so he told me."

"Our firm are agents for many old courtly families," said the clerk; "they are solicitors of long standing, but I really do not remember that name."

"I am sure that I am right," said Daisy. "I have the address—Messrs. Cooper, Thavies Inn. All letters are sent there."

The clerk looked puzzled.

"I have a good memory," he said, "and really the name is strange to me."

"Will you speak to Mr. Cooper," said Daisy; "I will wait."

The clerk bowed, placed a chair, and retired. Daisy sat down. Nearly an hour passed before Daisy was able to see Mr. Cooper. Then she was shown into a small room, where an elderly gentleman sat before a large table, that was covered with papers. He looked up in surprise as this fair, sweet-faced woman stood before him.

He waited for Daisy to speak. She asked the same question:

"Would he be pleased to give her Mr. Clifton's address?"

He referred to a ledger that lay near him.

"Clifton!" he repeated, slowly. "We have not such a name on our books."

But Daisy persisted.

"I assure you," she said, "that you have; you have the charge of his affairs; he told me so, and his letters are sent here, I know; I have sent some myself."

It did not occur to Mr. Cooper just at that moment that Sir Clinton Adair had received several letters addressed to Mr. Clifton; even had he remembered the fact, the astute lawyer would not have owned it; but he did not remember it, and stoutly denied that the name of Clifton was known in the offices.

"You must be mistaken," he said to Daisy.

"How can I be mistaken, when he is—" "My own husband" she was about to add, but she checked herself; better, perhaps, not to say that. There was evidently a mystery, or why did the lawyer not recognize the name?

"Clifton?" repeated Mr. Cooper; "the name seems in some way familiar to me, but we certainly do no business for any one who bears it."

Suddenly it occurred to Daisy that it was just possible her husband had assumed the name. She had no reason for thinking so, yet it must be the case. This was assuredly the office, and, if not known by that name, he must be by some other. Why did people hide their names? As a rule, it was because they desired to hide themselves.

Had she discovered the mystery?—had she solved it? Was this the cause of his brooding in silence, of his constant thought, of his isolation? Was this the reason that he refused to know people, and preferred the solitude of the hills? Had he done some wrong for which he could be punished? Ah! Heaven forbid, if that be the case, that she should be the one to betray him—Heaven forbid! Daisy's heart beat fast; she said to herself that she was on the brink of a discovery at last. This was the mystery, and no word of hers should betray him—not one single word!

"Will you give me some particulars?" said Mr. Cooper; "perhaps I may be able to help you."

But Daisy drew back with marked hesitation; she thought to herself she had better say no more, or, unwittingly, she might betray him.

"I think," she said, "that I will call again. I have probably made a mistake."

But the lawyer was curious; this fresh, fair face interested him.

"Did I understand that you had sent letters here to a Mr. Clifton?" he asked; but Daisy was on her guard—she would not betray him; only let her once get safely out of this place, she would never enter it again. She answered quite evasively:

"I may have been mistaken; I—I will look over my papers and see."

Suddenly she paused; for, plainly as she had ever heard anything in her life, she heard the voice of her husband in the next room; he was speaking to Mr. Brown, the head clerk.

"I need not trouble Mr. Cooper," he said; "the fact is, I am very much annoyed. My housekeeper is leaving very suddenly,

and I have made all arrangements for the season; I must have one at once. Ask Mr. Cooper to put an advertisement in all the principal papers, to apply here; he will choose more wisely for me than I can choose for myself."

She did not hear the clerk's reply, but her husband said:

"I will call again this afternoon about it; just write down what I require."

Then there was silence. Her face had grown white as death; her pulse seemed to bound in her veins. Mr. Cooper was looking at her in wonder.

"I beg your pardon," she said, "but I do not feel well. I will call again."

But she did not rise to go. What if she met him in that outer room? It seemed to Daisy that her heart was clutched with an iron hand—the breath came in hot, quick gasps from her lips. The lawyer looked at her in puzzled alarm.

"I am quite sure that you are ill," he said, hastily.

It never occurred to him, shrewd and clever as he was, to connect in any way the pallor and agitation of the fair-faced woman before him with the sound of the voice heard in the next room. His eyes were fixed with such unwavering keenness on Daisy, she was compelled to answer him.

"I am not ill; but I am not used to London; it frightens me—the noise, the bustle, the glare. I am confused."

Then she heard footsteps, and she knew that her husband was leaving the place.

"I will call again," she said, in a half-stifled voice. "I must go now."

And just as she reached the door she saw her husband pass through it and disappear.

CHAPTER XLI.

ONE HALF OF THE MYSTERY.

DAISY was certain of his identity; she would have known his face anywhere—the handsome, high-bred face, with the beautiful eyes and mouth. At first it seemed to her that the shock was so great she must fall to the ground; then she steadied herself. After all, why need she be afraid?—why be astonished at finding him there? It was only to be expected. She went to the civil young clerk who had spoken to her on her first entrance, and, trying to assume a *non-chalant* air, said:

"Who is that gentleman—the one who has just passed out? You opened the door for him."

The clerk looked at her, evidently puzzled as to whether he ought to answer the question or not.

"I know him," she continued, in a careless tone, "but I can not recall his name."

The clerk was quite satisfied.

"It is Sir Clinton Adair," he replied.

Again the iron hand seemed to clutch her heart and hold it still;

nothing but her sense of what was at stake kept her from betraying herself. She continued to repeat it in a voice even more careless.

"Sir Clinton Adair!" she said. "Ah, yes; I had forgotten."

Then she passed out; it seemed to her that she must have fresh air, or she should die. She went out into the crowded streets. The throng of people, the noises of carts, drays, cabs, omnibuses, the cries of the street venders, all confused her; her heart and brain seemed to be on fire. She walked on a few steps, then stood quite still, looking round her with a bewildered air. A gentleman passing by noticed it, and looked pityingly at the fair woman, dressed in deep black, who was evidently lost in the crowd. He touched his hat, and spoke to her.

"Are you looking for a cab?" he asked, gravely.

"Yes," she replied; and he, seeing the dreamy, bewildered expression of her face, said to himself there was something wrong.

He stood by her side in silence until the cab he had signaled for her came up. Then he held the door open while she entered.

"Thank you," said Daisy; "you are very good."

"I fancied you had lost your way," he replied; "and that is a very serious thing to do in London. Where shall I tell the man to drive to?"

Again he was startled at the innocent, helpless, bewildered look.

"I am in great trouble," said Daisy, "and I want to go to a quiet place—some place where I can think. These streets confuse me."

"Drive to the park," said the gentleman. Then, with a low bow, he disappeared; but more than once that day he spoke of the fair, graceful woman he had met in the crowded street.

At last she was alone, with the blue sky above her, and the sweet, fragrant air refreshing her—alone in the green, undulating park, where the tall trees were budding into fresh life, and she had time to think. She saw chairs beneath the trees, and she sat down on one to rest. She drew a long sigh of relief—a deep sigh, that was almost a moan.

So she had found out one-half of the mystery at last—her husband was not Mr. Clifton; he was Sir Clinton Adair. Why had he assumed that name? For what purpose?—to what end?

Her thoughts went back to the place and the hour when she had first heard it. She remembered bending over him, and asking him his name; he had most certainly answered, "Mr. Clifton." She could not have been mistaken, and, if she were mistaken, why did he not correct her? He always called himself Clifton; she had known no other name since her marriage than Mrs. Clifton; he had given her that address for her letters; there was no mistake about it; and, after all, it was not his own name. Why had he assumed it? Not—oh, Heaven!—surely not to deceive her. He had married her of his own free will, and they were safely, legally, properly married. It could not have been from any motive connected with her—why was it?

Had he committed any slight error or indiscretion that caused him to hide himself? She could no longer think that. He was not hiding; he went through the London streets; he was making arrangements for living in London for three months; he was evi-

dently well known in the lawyer's office; there was no hiding, no secrecy there. She said to herself that the same cause which led him to pass by a name that was not his, was the mystery that pervaded his whole life. She must find it out; then, when she knew what it was, she would know how to act. Sir Clinton Adair! Then Daisy gave a little start and a cry. If he were indeed Sir Clinton, she was Lady Adair, and the little child in the far-off home—what was he? Why had he kept his rank and title a secret from her? Was he ashamed of her? Did he consider her unworthy to share them? No: for if that had been the case, he would not, in the first instance, have married her.

She could not solve the mystery. The longer she thought of it, the more deeply it puzzled her; but she was more determined than ever to find it out. How? That became the grand question. She must decide upon some method. Already her courage and perseverance had led her to make this discovery. She knew some of his secret; she would discover the rest.

"There never was a will yet," said Daisy, "without a way. I have the will, I must make the way."

If she could, by some means or other, get to know where he lived. Then it occurred to her that would be easy enough; she had but to look in a London directory to find out that. She remembered well hearing her husband speak of it, and say that every large town should have its directory. She had never thought then that the directory would come to her aid. She would try it. It seemed to her that if she could see the outside of the house, she should gather something even from that.

Daisy lost no time; she walked from the green park, where the air, and the trees, and the grass had refreshed her; she did not stop until she came to a large store—a stationer's; she went in, and, after making some trifling purchases, she asked to look at the directory. She was some time in finding it, but she saw it at last—Sir Clinton Adair, Lifdale House.

Daisy looked at the store-keeper who had been serving her. He seemed good-tempered and amiable, she thought, and she inquired of him if he knew where Lifdale House was.

"Yes," he knew; "it was one of the large mansions facing Hyde Park to the west," and he gave her ample directions how to reach there. Half an hour afterward Daisy was standing opposite to that stately and magnificent mansion. They little dreamed, those who passed by and glanced casually at the tall figure so plainly dressed in black, that there was the mistress of that superb abode—the unloved wife looking for the first time on her husband's home. Could it be his, that grand mansion? She thought of the little cottage at Ferndale; she thought of the pretty little villa among the hills of sunny France. What were they compared to this? How could the lord of this stately abode ever have contented himself there?

Could it be? Should she wake up and find herself dreaming, the babe in the cot by her side, the vine-leaves climbing the windows, the song of bright-plumaged birds in her ears? Was all this mystery which oppressed her and demented her a wild fancy?

She stood opposite the house, her tall figure draped in a black dress, her fair face hidden by her veil. Ah, it was no fancy, no

dream! She saw a carriage drive rapidly up to the door, and her husband, alighting from it, enter the house.

Then it was his—this sumptuous carriage, these prancing steeds, the servants in livery; all this was his—he who had been content to live in a little villa, with two servants!

“Either,” said Daisy, “he loved me very much to do that for my sake, or he does not love me at all. Which is it, Sir Clinton Adair? The mystery is one of two things,” she said; “either he is ashamed of me, and does not intend to bring me here—will not allow his friends to know anything about me; it is either that, or he cares for some one else.”

The mystery had been brought down to one of these two solvings. Which was the truth?

“I wish,” said Daisy, “that I had the ring of Fortunatus, or the power of the invisible genie; then I would go into his house, and watch him until I knew all about it.”

Why not go into his house in some character or other unknown to him—go in disguise? She had read of such things in novels; she had known them to be true—why not imitate them?

She became absorbed in this idea. There was only one way in which she could get into the house—that would be disguised as a servant. But how to manage it she had no idea.

Suddenly it occurred to her that her husband had said he wanted a housekeeper, and Mr. Cooper was to attend to it for him. She could not quite see her way, but here was an opening at least. She returned to the hotel, her mind filled with this project; she could neither eat nor sleep for thinking of it.

The next morning she saw the advertisement:

WANTED—A Housekeeper, to take charge of a nobleman's house in town. First-class references required. Apply between the hours of 12 and 2, to Messrs. Cooper, 3 and 4 Thavies Inn.

“What is it?” cried Daisy, excitedly. She looked at the words with some curiosity, as though they could tell her the mystery lying beneath them. “Wanted a housekeeper! Sir Clinton Adair, there is no word here of the wife you left in France, thinking she would be content to remain there.

“Between the hours of twelve and two,” she thought. “I will go and watch; I will get to know who succeeds. Something will come of it, after all, I feel quite sure.”

She dressed herself very plainly; she hid all the wealth of rippling brown hair beneath the somewhat old-fashioned bonnet that she had purchased for the occasion. She looked at herself with some satisfaction.

“I do not believe,” she thought, “that, even if he met me in the street, he would know me.”

It was easy this time to find her way to Thavies Inn. The clock was just striking twelve. She saw several respectable elderly women waiting; she looked at them with great curiosity.

“So,” she said to herself, “after all, it will be one of these women who will keep my husband's house.”

They were admitted into the office, and, after a short interval,

one returned looking very disconsolate—evidently she had no chance; then came two more, talking together eagerly.

“She was the Duke of Trelawn’s housekeeper,” Daisy heard one say to the other; “I knew she would get it when I saw her there.”

“Yes,” was the mournful reply; “there was no chance against such recommendations as hers.”

Two more followed, and it seemed to Daisy that she knew the successful one from the contented expression of her face. She was also talking to her companion, and Daisy, listening, heard her say.

“I am to go on Thursday; come and see me before then.”

Mechanically, Daisy followed her; this woman, who was to keep her husband’s house, interested her greatly. She saw her stop an omnibus, and say to the conductor, “Put me down at Meadow Lane, Holloway.” Without a moment’s hesitation Daisy entered the same omnibus.

CHAPTER XLII.

DAISY’S STRATAGEM.

THE woman who had so powerfully excited Daisy’s curiosity did not appear to notice her; during the greater part of the journey she occupied herself in studying a torn book of accounts; the crowded streets disappeared, and stunted trees, with ill-favored flowers, gave some sign of a better air. Holloway was reached, and Daisy looked out for Meadow Lane. The bell rang; the omnibus stopped.

“Meadow Lane,” said the conductor; and the housekeeper-elect got out.

Daisy followed her. She walked down the lane until she reached a row of pretty cottages, with little gardens in front. The woman entered the third of these, and Daisy, to her intense delight, saw ‘Apartments to let’ in the window.

“How my difficulties vanish,” she said to herself. “I can go into the house at once, on the plea of engaging rooms; in fact, I will engage them.”

But a sudden idea occurred to Daisy. What if, in the after time, Sir Clinton brought her home as his wife? It would never do for people to recognize her. She must disguise herself.

Away went Daisy, without rest, or time, or thought, only anxious to do everything as quickly as possible. She bought a black wig; she bought a white cap and black veil, through which her face could not be seen. With these she returned to her hotel. She dressed herself in her room. Brushing back the golden brown ripples, she put on the black coiffure. It so completely changed her appearance that she did not recognize herself. She surmounted that with a cap that she was assured was of the style worn by all housekeepers in good families. She had asked for that kind of thing at the shop.

She laughed aloud at herself.

“Even baby would not know me,” she said. “He would take me for a stranger.”

She fastened the thick veil carefully down, so that if she met any of the servants of the hotel they would not see the change in her;

and then, armed for victory, as she thought, she set out again for Meadow Lane.

It was the dusk of the evening now: and Daisy rapped at the door. It was opened by a small child, who wore a very large bonnet.

"You have some rooms to let," said Daisy. "I should like to see them."

"Mother," cried the child, "here is some one about the rooms."

"That's rare good luck, Eliza Ann," Daisy heard; "I shall be pleased if I can let them just as you are going."

"It will be very fortunate," replied a stiffer, colder voice, which Daisy at once said to herself was the housekeeper's; then a stout, active, motherly-looking woman came out into the dimly-lighted passage.

"You want to see the rooms, ma'am?" she said to Daisy. "We have two, a parlor and front bedroom."

"I should like to see them," said Daisy; and the mistress of the house led the way into the front parlor. She looked round with an air of pride in its possession.

"It is a pretty room, ma'am, and very clean," she said, mentally appraising her visitor's dress. "Not worth more than ten shillings a week," she said to herself. "Still I may get that."

While Daisy thought:

"She has an open face, probably an open heart; if I remain quiet, I shall hear all about it."

She was not far wrong in her estimation of good Mrs. Freeman's character.

"The rooms are well aired, ma'am," she said: "indeed, my sister, Mrs. Jordan, has been staying with me, and she has had them."

"Is your sister leaving you?" she asked, in a tone of kindly interest.

"Oh, yes; she is going out again as housekeeper. She is going to live at Sir Clinton Adair's."

She pronounced the words with such an air of importance that Daisy involuntarily thought:

"What would you say if you knew that Lady Adair was speaking to you?"

"My sister, Mrs. Jordan, has been a widow some years. She has been housekeeper in many grand families. She was at the Duke of Trelawn's."

And again kindly Mrs. Freeman paused to see if her visitor was overcome by the mention of such names. Daisy making no signs, she continued:

"My sister had only one son, and they say that he has grown to be a rich man in America; he was to have sent for his mother, but he has not done so. She left the Duke of Trelawn's on purpose to go to him; but, as he has not sent, she has taken this place. She has been giving me twelve shillings a week for the rooms, but I am willing to take ten."

"I will give you fifteen," said Daisy, quietly, and the woman looked up quickly.

"I will make it up to you in attention, madam," she said, smil-

ingly. "The only thing is, these rooms will not be at liberty until my sister goes, next Thursday—that is four days yet."

Daisy's face fell; she hoped to be in the house, and to know her husband's secret before then.

"Perhaps," she said, "you would not mind trying to accommodate me until then? I am not over-particular, and I should not like to take other rooms after seeing these."

"I will speak to my sister, Mrs. Jordan," said the woman. She raised her voice, calling out, "Eliza Ann, will you come this way?" and then Daisy saw again the woman who had come smilingly from Messrs. Cooper's office. She looked doubtful on hearing what was wanted. Turning to her sister, she said:

"You know, if a letter does come from Harry, I should give up Sir Clinton's and start at once, so that, after all, my plans are uncertain. Yes, I think we may manage to accommodate the lady."

So it was decided that Daisy should remain and share the rooms with Mrs. Jordan for a few days. Nothing could have suited her better. Mrs. Jordan hardly understood the intense interest with which their lodger listened to every detail of her life. To Daisy's disappointment, she knew nothing of Sir Clinton Adair. The only thing that she could tell her was, he had a very large and magnificent estate in the country; it was called Eastwold, and was quite a palace in its way.

"Then you are not going there?" said Daisy.

"No," she replied, "I am for the town house; these grand people all have two or three houses, you know—one in London and others in the country."

"Have they?" asked Daisy. "Is he, then—this Sir Clinton Adair—one of the grand people?"

Mrs. Jordan looked at her with some little contempt.

"I should have thought," she said, "that any one knew that; he is a baronet, and is one of the richest and noblest in England."

"Is he married?" asked Daisy.

"No; and I wonder at it. I saw him once at the Duke of Trelawn's, and a handsomer man, to my mind, never was."

"Are you sure he is not married?" asked Daisy.

Mrs. Jordan laughed.

"Yes," she replied. "Mr. Cooper, the lawyer, who engaged me, told me there was no Lady Adair."

Daisy sat in silence for some minutes, then she said:

"That seems a great pity. With so much, he should have a wife to share it. Perhaps he will be married."

"I can not tell," she replied, cautiously.

"Is there any rumor of the kind?"

"None that I have heard," she answered.

And then Daisy proceeded to put her through a catechism of a housekeeper's duties. Already a scheme was forming in her busy brain.

She learned from Mrs. Jordan during those two days the chief duties of a housekeeper—what was expected from her, what to do, what to avoid.

"Do you see much of the gentlemen?" she asked. "Do you take your orders from them when there are no mistresses?"

"Well," replied Mrs. Jordan, frankly, "to tell you the honest truth, I do not think much of men myself; rich or poor, gentle or simple, they are pretty much alike. I lived two years with a husband—well, I say no more. But, when they give an order, they never seem to know what to say. The way I manage them is, I listen to every word, and then do what I think best."

Daisy smiled at the notion; she did not lose a minute. Mrs. Jordan had never found such an intelligent, appreciative listener before.

"Shall you see Sir Clinton Adair very often?" she asked one morning, among other questions, and Mrs. Jordan thought how simple and ignorant she was.

"If the same rules are observed there as in many other places," she replied, "I shall see him every morning after breakfast. The Duke of Trelawn used to go to his library after breakfast to read the papers. I went to him there and received all the orders he had to give. That was a tiresome place; there were always guests going and coming, rooms to prepare and arrange. My greatest trouble," continued Mrs. Jordan, growing confidential, "was not so much the grand people themselves as their servants. To my mind, a duke's valet is more trouble than a duke; a duchess' maid gives more trouble than her mistress; but I shall not have much of that kind of thing at Sir Clinton's."

"Why not?" asked Daisy, trying hard to conceal the interest she could not help feeling.

"He does not entertain—he visits a great deal; but Mr. Cooper said, 'beyond a few dinner-parties, there would not be much in the way of gayety.'"

So Daisy learned her lesson. She had almost resolved to ask Mrs. Jordan to let her go in her place. She would offer her a hundred pounds, and promise to provide for her afterward; but fate was kinder to her.

On Tuesday morning the letter that Mrs. Jordan had so long and anxiously expected arrived; she was in sore distress—it ought to have reached her a fortnight since, and had been missent. It was from her son saying how anxiously he was expecting her, inclosing a handsome remittance for her expenses out. In the pride of her motherly love, she showed the letter to Daisy. It read:

"No more work, mother. I am a rich man now, but I shall never enjoy my riches until you are here to share them. I have a grand, beautiful house, but it will never be home to me until you are in it. I will not return to England; I like America best—men are more equal here; so you must come to me, mother. Come by the Cunard line, and come first-class—have every comfort. You shall not keep house again for any one but me."

"He must be a very kind son," said Daisy, as she returned the letter. "You will go, I suppose?" Then a sudden hope throbbed in her heart and flushed her face. "You will not go to Sir Clinton Adair's now, I suppose?" she said.

"No; I am sorry about it. I should not have gone about the place, but I fancied my son had changed his mind, and thought he had got married, or something of that kind. I hardly know what to do. I told Mr. Cooper this might happen."

"Do you mean Mr. Cooper of the firm in Thavies Inn?" asked Daisy, pretending ignorance.

"Yes; do you know them?"

"I have had business with them," was the evasive reply. "Indeed, strange to say, I am going there to-morrow. I know what I should do in your place."

"What?" asked Mrs. Jordan, briefly.

"I should write to Mr. Cooper and tell him what had happened, and that, as you could not now take the place, he must look out for some one else; and, if you like, I will take the letter."

"It will be the best plan," said Mrs. Jordan. "I shall not certainly have time to call myself."

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE NEW HOUSEKEEPER.

NOTHING succeeds like success. There had been a time when, strong as Daisy's resolve was, she had no idea how the task before her was to be accomplished; now it seemed as though her path was made so straight she could not help tripping over it. Mrs. Jordan confided to her that she was no great scholar, and she therefore offered to assist with the letter. It was written, sealed, and addressed. Only for a few minutes had Daisy a horrible pain of suspense—it was when Mrs. Jordan, looking with some complacency at the letter, said:

"Perhaps, after all, it would be better to send it by the post."

She dare not show any anxiety, but replied quite calmly:

"Perhaps it would. I am going to the post with some letters of my own; shall I take it for you?"

Then, with the privilege that ought to be reserved entirely for ladies, Mrs. Jordan changed her mind.

"After all, it will be better for you to take it," she said; "it will save them the trouble of writing to me, and you can tell me what they say."

Daisy started on her errand.

"There is only one thing in the way," she thought; "I shall have to evade the truth. I will not tell a lie, but I can not adhere to the strict truth—I must evade it. I will go to Thavies Inn and wait about there until I see Mr. Cooper; that will help me. If she leaves England on Saturday next, as she says, I am safe enough. She will not have time to think about Sir Clinton Adair."

She went to Thavies Inn, and waited there until Mr. Cooper came out of his office; then she went back to Meadow Lane.

"I have been a long time away," she said, "but I have had several little matters to attend to."

Mrs. Jordan did not seem vitally interested; she had done with it all now, and only wanted to be with her son. Her heart was over the sea with her boy, not in London.

"I went to Thavies Inn," said Daisy, "and I saw Mr. Cooper."

"Well," said Mrs. Jordan, "was he angry?"

"No, he did not seem to be. I think they have some one else—some one he knows—to go in your place,"

"That is all right, then," said Mrs. Jordan; "I should have been sorry to inconvenience them; but if they have some one else in my place, I shall not give the matter another thought."

"Now," said Daisy to herself, "the coast is clear for me."

She made all her arrangements; she purchased a plain, black silk dress, white lace caps such as she saw Mrs. Jordan wore; she purchased a pair of spectacles, and laughed at herself when she was fully equipped.

"I shall be able to look Sir Clinton Adair in the face," she said, "and he will not know me."

On the Thursday morning she affected to receive a letter; she called her landlady into her room, and told her how sorry she was to be compelled to leave at a day's notice, but she had resolved upon paying a month's rent.

The busy little woman looked somewhat crest-fallen at finding that she was to lose so good a lodger; the money consoled her, and they parted on good terms.

Some short time after that, with all her difficulties ended, Daisy found herself at the door of Lifdale House. She took with her two boxes, which she hoped would present a sufficiently imposing appearance.

It was soon known among the servants that the new house-keeper, Mrs. Jordan, had arrived. They vied with each other which should pay her the most attention, knowing that much of their comfort would depend on her good will. A pleasant-looking house-maid, Margerie Low, volunteered to show her to her room.

Daisy was thankful for the relief—her heart was beating so fast, it was with difficulty she breathed. At the top of the grand staircase Margerie pointed to a suite of apartments.

"Those are Sir Clinton's rooms," she said; and again Daisy was in danger of losing her self-possession.

It seemed so curious to hear her husband's name from these strangers.

Then she went to her room, fondly hoping to have a few minutes' rest; but Margerie Low intended to stand high in the good graces of the new housekeeper. She persisted in remaining to help her, and Daisy was compelled to submit.

"Anything I can do for you, Mrs. Jordan?" said Margerie. "Sir Clinton said that I was to wait upon you."

"That was very kind," said Daisy, unguardedly, and the house-maid looked up in wonder at the expression.

Then she became eloquent about her master—telling what a good, kind master he was, and how much better it would be for him if he would marry, he seemed so sad, so lonely.

"Lonely!" said Daisy—it was on her lips to cry out, "he has a wife and child;" but prudence prevailed, and she said nothing.

Margerie smiled again.

"We live in hopes," she said; "people may think what they will, but I know that Sir Clinton loves some one."

"How do you know it?" asked Daisy.

"I could tell by a hundred signs," replied shrewd Margerie.

Then Daisy saw that if she were to have a few minutes to herself she must send the good-natured girl away.

"I wish you would make me a cup of tea, Margerie," she said; "I am tired."

Away went the house-maid, and the young wife was left alone. She fastened the door, lest, returning suddenly, Margerie should surprise her; then kneeling down, she buried her face in her hands. She wanted to pray—to ask Heaven to help her, to bless her enterprise—but she could not; her heart beat, her brain burned; she could only pray with parted lips that seemed to ask mercy in their faint whispers.

She was under the shelter of her husband's roof at last—here in his house—in the house where she ought to have been so eagerly welcomed—here in disguise—here where she should see him, speak to him, and he would not know her. It would be a terrible trial, but she could bear that, and more, if she could find out his secret.

After a time she grew calmer. The house-maid returned with the tea; she drank it, and then was rather startled at seeing Margerie's large brown eyes fixed on her face. The girl looked at her so intently that Daisy grew startled, and said to her at last:

"What makes you look at me so?"

"I can not tell," said Margerie. "You look young, yet you look old; you have a strange face, Mrs. Jordan—they said you were elderly."

"So I am," said Daisy, sharply.

"Your face looks so smooth. I thought you would be a very different person." And in some vague way after that Margerie was much less familiar with the new housekeeper.

The housekeeper's room was on the first floor, and as Daisy went down she heard the well-known, well-loved voice of her husband; he was speaking to one of the servants, inquiring if she had come. For one minute Daisy stood quite still, and it seemed to her that she must fall on her face and die—that she had neither the strength nor the courage to meet him. She stood still and silent as a marble statue, then roused herself; she must either go on and meet him, or she must run right away. Again she heard the well-loved voice:

"You can tell Mrs. Jordan that I will see her at once; I am going out and have not many minutes to spare. I shall be in the library."

A reprieve. She drew a long, deep breath; she was saved at least for a few minutes.

Then Adolphe, the valet, came to her. He bowed, after the fashion of his nation, polite to every one in woman's garb.

"Sir Clinton wishes to see Mrs. Jordan; he is in the library."

"Which is the library door?" she asked.

He showed it to her, and, bringing all her courage to bear, she knocked at it.

"Come in," said her husband's voice, and Daisy, with trembling hands, opened the door and went in.

He was seated at a table, writing busily. He laid down his pen when she entered, and, turning round in his chair, looked at her.

"Good-day, Mrs. Jordan," he said, in a cheerful voice; "I am very glad to see you."

She stood quite still, thanking Heaven in her heart that she had put on the blue spectacles, still without the least movement. She

saw a puzzled expression pass over his face, as though something half bewildered him, then it passed away, and he was himself.

"I am afraid," he said, "that you will find everything in great disorder; my late housekeeper left me in a very hurried fashion; you must try to manage as well as you can."

Daisy made a courtesy that at any other time would have made her smile. She did not answer, indeed she could not have spoken a word just then to have saved her life.

"I am not very much at home, myself," he continued, "so that double vigilance is required on the part of my housekeeper. I should like you to come to me every morning for orders. To-day I shall not return to dinner—to-morrow I have some friends. You can make your arrangements for them, and submit them to me."

"Yes, Sir Clinton," she said, in a faint low voice so faint that he barely heard it; even the low sound caused him to look more curiously at her.

"You saw Mr. Cooper, Mrs. Jordan, I suppose?" he continued; and again her reply was hardly audible.

"He informed you of all needful arrangements, and settled everything to your satisfaction, I suppose?"

"Yes," said Daisy.

The impulse was so strong upon her to fly to him, to clasp her arms round his neck, to say:

"Do you not know me? Can any disguise hide me from you? I am Daisy—Daisy, your wife!"

For one half minute that impulse was so strong, it was with the utmost difficulty she controlled it.

She saw Sir Clinton take up his pen and dip it into the ink; then she knew that their interview was over.

Sir Clinton looked up suddenly again.

"You must be sure to tell me," he said, "if there is any evil that requires remedying. In a large household, without a mistress to superintend it, servants are apt to grow careless; if you have any complaint to make, I shall always find leisure to attend to you."

Then he resumed his writing, and she went away. She trembled in every limb; her face was pale as death; great drops stood on her brow. It seemed to her that no woman could have gone through so much and have lived.

"He did not know me," she thought. "Ah, well! no disguise that he could have assumed would ever have hidden him from me; I should have known him in spite of all."

She had been half startled by his pale, worn face; evidently he was not in England for the sole purpose of enjoying himself; he looked wan, haggard, full of care—he looked worse than she had ever seen him. There was something despondent about him. Could it be that he was lonely and unhappy away from her?

It was hard work to attend to the duties of a house, to give her attention to plate and linen, to the complaints of house-maids, the blunders of footmen, the wants of the cook; it was not for that she was there, but to know the secret of her husband's life—to find out if he loved any one else instead of loving her—to know why he left her in France, and never spoke of bringing her home.

These were the thoughts that occupied her mind, causing the servants to look at her in wonder as she made one error after another.

Then Daisy, when she saw the expression of surprise on the face of those around her, roused herself. She must be on the alert; she must not give way to dreams. If she was ever to master the secret of Sir Clinton's life, she must be more on the alert, and not cause any suspicion of herself.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE TREASURED ROSE.

"WAS there ever a fate so strange as mine?" said Daisy to herself.

"Here I am housekeeper in this magnificent mansion, where I ought to be mistress; here I am a servant in my husband's home—I, who am really Lady Adair."

She had risen early on this morning after her installment at Lifdale House. She wanted to look about her, to become familiar with the rooms, to find her way—above all, to see if there was anywhere any trace of herself, or of any other's love. She asked Margerie to show her the different rooms, and the good-natured girl cheerfully consented, talking gayly to her all the time.

"I have heard," she said, "that Sir Clinton's place in the country, Eastwold, is very beautiful. Have you seen it, Mrs. Jordan?"

No; Mrs. Jordan had only heard of it.

"I have heard that at Eastwold there is a magnificent suite of rooms, that were prepared by Sir Clinton for some lady whom he never married after all."

The housekeeper turned quickly away lest the girl should see the pallor that overspread her face.

"A lady that he never married!" she repeated; "who was it, Margerie?"

"I do not know. I have heard the servants talk about it, but I know nothing myself. They said that he loved some lady very dearly, and that he had these beautiful rooms all made ready for her; and afterward they parted, no one knows how or why. The rooms have been shut up ever since, and he will not allow them to be opened."

"Did you never know who it was?" asked poor Daisy.

"No; nor I never heard why they parted; but I shall always think that is what makes Sir Clinton so silent and so sad—though he seems to have cheered up a little of late."

"Can that be because of me?" thought Daisy.

But her heart misgave her sadly. There must be another love in the way. She did not like to ask any more questions. A moment's reflection showed her that it was an injury to her husband's dignity to ask questions of his servants. She quickly turned the conversation, but she did not forget one word of it. She looked through the rooms—there was no trace of her, none of the child—no photograph, no note, no half-finished letters, nothing that could have betrayed his marriage even to the most curious of servants. She saw nothing else, not one single memento of any woman. She

looked at the cards lying on the hall table. There were all kinds of grand names—none that interested her.

She was surprised at the splendor of the house; everything in it was superb; the thought that occurred to her constantly was that he had all this, yet had never told her. Her baby, the lovely, laughing boy she had left in France, was heir to all this splendor, heir to the title his father bore, heir of Eastwold. Ah, how carefully she must keep the secret of this masquerade of hers for her boy's sake!—no one must know that she had been in his father's house disguised.

In the drawing-room Daisy saw one picture that attracted her attention; it was not a portrait, merely a study of a woman's face, laughing and fair, with golden hair and white brow, with dark violet eyes and sweet mobile lips. It was a picture that had attracted Sir Clinton's attention because of its likeness to Lady May. Daisy looked long and eagerly at it—she had seen no one like it. Could it be that it resembled any one Sir Clinton knew?

"You are admiring that picture," said Margerie; "Sir Clinton likes it. I often see him standing before it with a smile on his lips. If I were in his place, young, and handsome, and rich, and loved a beautiful lady like that, I would soon make her Lady Adair."

The name struck Daisy like a blow—she was Lady Adair; no other could ever lay claim to the title or bear the name. Then she asked where Sir Clinton took his breakfast, and was told in the morning-room.

"Very sad and very unreal it looks," said Margerie, "to see a gentleman like him sitting down to the breakfast-table alone—always alone; he does not care to use the dining-room unless we have company."

"It is to the morning-room, then, that I must go," she said, "when I want to see him?"

The answer was "Yes."

"There are some rooms you have not seen yet, Mrs. Jordan—Sir Clinton's room—his study; very few people are allowed to enter there; he keeps his papers and all kinds of treasures there; the housekeeper always cleaned that herself; he would not even let us enter."

"And there," thought Daisy to herself—"there, if any place, I shall find the clew to my husband's secrets."

After breakfast she went to him. As she looked at him she half wondered that he should prefer this solitude to his cheerful home at Leville. Here he was alone; there she had always been with him, ready to wait upon him, to attend him, to talk to him; he sat in the midst of blooming flowers and singing birds; this seemed to her very lonely by contrast. Sir Clinton did not look up this time.

"We shall dine at eight, Mrs. Jordan; I have four gentlemen coming; you will see that the cook sends us a good dinner. Have you found everything, so far, to your satisfaction?"

"Yes, Sir Clinton," replied Daisy.

He turned round suddenly.

"Mrs. Jordan," he said, "have I seen you before? Your voice is strangely familiar to me."

She was half alarmed, but consoled herself by thinking that it was quite impossible that he could recognize her.

"I do not remember, Sir Clinton," she said. "I have been in many places."

He looked attentively at her.

"You have a voice exactly like another one that I know," he said; to himself he added, in a low voice, "It troubles me."

Daisy made a courtesy, and went away.

"I wish I could disguise my voice," she thought. "It will betray me."

"It troubles me," said Sir Clinton.

Why should it trouble him?

Then she met Adolphe, who told her his head ached, and he should like some green tea.

"Were you up late last night?" she asked him.

The discreet valet replied that he really never looked at the clock when his master returned.

"It could not have been late though," he continued, "for he was at Cliffe House, and he never stays late there."

That day Sir Clinton was out in the morning. He rode after lunch; then his friends came to dinner; so that she did not see much of him; but going into the library, later on, she saw a letter addressed to herself, lying on the table; she read the direction—"Mrs. Clifton, Leville, France." Then he was writing to her, he was not forgetting her. It was such a strange life, this of hers. But as yet she had seen nothing to corroborate her suspicions, no letters came to him that caused him any emotion.

One evening he came home to dinner, and in his hand he held, very carefully, a white rose. A small, lovely rose, so nicely arranged, with the green leaves, Daisy felt sure that some lady had worn it. He passed her in the hall.

"Mrs. Jordan," he said, "get me some fresh, cold water; I want to preserve this flower."

With her own hand she brought him a small vase containing clean, cold water; and he placed the white rose in it. She saw that he had completely forgotten her presence; he bent over the little bud. She saw him touch it with his lips, and she wondered where he had obtained it. She noticed how jealously he guarded it; he allowed no one to touch it. He kept it living as long as he could. When faded it disappeared, and Daisy knew that he had taken it.

"If he loves any one," she thought to herself. "it is the person from whom he had had that flower." How was she to discover who that was? She longed to know how he received his letters from France—if they gave him pleasure or pain; and she so managed one of her morning visits to his study, that it occurred identically at post-time. Just as she opened the door the footman was there with a small bundle of letters on a silver salver. Her quick eye detected one from herself, from France, among them.

"I will give those to Sir Clinton," she said, and the man left the salver in her hands.

As usual, Sir Clinton was reading when she entered. She laid the salver down.

"The letters, Sir Clinton," she said, in a low voice.

He took them up instantly, and she saw the first that riveted his attention was her own. It was not pleasure that shone in his face, for from it his eyes seemed to take a deeper shadow; his hands slightly trembled; he took it up and put it in his pocket; the others he laid carelessly on the table.

There was trouble in his face and in his voice—no delight, no pleasure, no love—deep, bitter trouble, and the last gleam of hope died, faint as it was, in her heart when she saw that troubled face. He did not seem to hear what she said; he waved his hand to the door.

“Will you please to return in half an hour?” he said. “I am rather put about; I can attend better to you then.”

It was her letter which put him about—she felt quite sure of that; he had looked right enough at first.

There was a horrible pain in her heart as this conviction flashed over her; she had felt but little hope; the certainty seemed more than she could bear.

She returned in half an hour, and had rapped twice at the door before he heard her; then, when she entered, she saw her own letter lying on the table open before him; his head was bent on his hands; he had evidently read it, and was thinking deeply. Was she mistaken, or could it be possible that the eyes raised to hers were dim with tears? There were great lines of pain round the lips. Before speaking to her he took the letter in his hands and tore it into shreds; even those shreds he most carefully burned; then he gave his attention to her, but she saw that it was quite mechanical. He listened; he said yes or no; but she felt quite sure that he had not heard one word.

“I beg your pardon, Sir Clinton,” she said, respectfully, in that feigned voice of hers; “I hope you have had no bad news.”

“No,” he replied, listlessly, “I have not.”

“You are not looking so well, sir, this morning. Is there anything I can do for you?”

He seemed pleased by her kindly interest.

“Nothing,” he replied, “thank you, Mrs. Jordan.”

She longed to say more, but dare not. Slowly enough she went away, closing the door behind her.

“I know what is the matter,” she thought, indignantly; “you have a letter from the wife you dislike, and the thought of her has been painful to you.”

She noticed that all the morning Sir Clinton remained in his room. She met Adolphe going out with a tri-cornered note in his hand.

“Does Sir Clinton lunch at home?” she asked.

“Yes; he was engaged to go to Cliffe House, but I am just taking a note of apology there.”

It was the second time that she had heard the name “Cliffe House,” and in the midst of all her pain she felt a dull wonder as to who lived there, and why he went so often. More than once that day she heard the comments of the servants—how out of spirits Sir Clinton was! how dull, how depressed, how ill he was looking!

“Why does he not marry?” cried honest Margerie; “he would not sit at home alone all day in that fashion if he had a wife.”

Another solemnly shook her head.

"In my opinion," she said, "there is some reason why he does not marry, and the same reason makes him always sad."

Daisy, listening, heard all, and kept the words buried in her heart.

CHAPTER XLV.

DAISY MAKES A DISCOVERY.

DAISY had been three weeks at Lifdale House, and she was no nearer the knowledge of her husband's secret than she had been at first. She had heard nothing, learned nothing, discovered nothing. Her husband was, as he said, not much at home; when he was he had usually one or two gentlemen with him. She saw nothing unusual in his conduct, except his constant sadness and depression.

"Has your master had any great trouble?" she asked Adolphe, one morning.

The valet looked at her with his fathomless eyes.

"I have never asked him, Mrs. Jordan," he replied.

Her face flushed at what she thought was a rebuke.

"Do not think I am curious, pray," she said, proudly; "but he is very kind to every one, and it seems so strange that he should be sad and care-worn."

"Englishmen have strange characters," said Adolphe, the profound. "I always think that they seem to enjoy a little misery."

"What should Sir Clinton have to make him miserable?" quoth Daisy; and again the valet replied only by a look of profound meaning.

"Adolphe," she asked, suddenly, "where is Cliffe House?"

No muscle of that well-trained face even stirred.

"I can not quite tell the locality," he replied; "somewhere in Hyde Park way."

"Who lives there?" was the next question.

He was evidently prepared for it. He said:

"It is a large house, only inhabited, I think, during the London season. When I called there I saw an elderly lady, very amiable, but decidedly *passé*, you understand."

Daisy breathed a sigh of relief. It was quite evident that Sir Clinton did not go there to see any one in particular.

He sent for her one morning.

"Mrs. Jordan," he said, "I do not care for the servants to go into my study; will you be kind enough to make it presentable for me to-day? I can trust you not to disturb my papers, and if you lift any of them up for the sake of dusting, be kind enough to leave them just as you find them."

Her heart gave one great bound. At last she should be on the track—at last she should discover that which, with her whole soul, she desired to know.

It was with difficulty that she controlled herself. When he told her all the little details of what he required done, she longed to be doing it.

"You quite understand, Mrs. Jordan?" he said, at length.

In her excitement she forgot her disguise, and replied, in her natural voice:

"Quite."

He looked up so quickly that she was afraid.

"I am one of those haunted by voices," he said, in a tone of great melancholy.

She saw him quit the house, and, with her whole soul trembling with eager anxiety, she hastened to his room. A feeling half of shyness came over her as she stood there. It was like a shrine or a sanctuary to her. How well she remembered those careless, untidy ways—books left open, papers all in a confused mass, extracts, poems, essays, everything in disorder. At Leville she had been accustomed to arrange all methodically for him, to sort his letters and papers, to arrange them in proper order; here she would not dare to do it; he would most surely recognize what he called her orderly touches.

She drew a deep breath of relief as she stood there with time to examine all, time to search for the traces she felt sure of finding.

The first thing that struck her was a book which had fallen open on to the floor. Raising it, she saw the well-known lines—lines over which she had often thought and pondered. The page was turned down, so that there could be no mistake.

"I am weary waiting—
Waiting for the May."

What could possibly make him think so much of those lines?—what could they mean? They seemed fatal to her. There were traces of something here. She found a small, white kid glove, so pretty and daintily perfumed. From whose hand had that been taken?

She found a knot of ribbon, the palest lavender; she found dried flowers, a very beautiful valentine, and several other little mementoes that had come from some lady, but not from herself. Indeed, as she looked leisurely through these papers, it grieved her to find that there was nothing in all the world which referred to herself—no mention of her name, no mention of Leville, none of their home, none of their little child. It was as though she did not exist. Tears of wounded love and mortified pride filled her eyes. It was cruel to be so completely ignored.

"He might just as well have no wife," she cried.—"I do not believe that he remembers my existence, except when he receives my letters."

Then she found among the papers on the table several beautiful little books of poems. She did not scruple to open them; they all contained the same inscription—"A *mon ami*, from M. T."

"Whoever it is, this M. T.," said Daisy to herself, "it is a person who knows his taste. All poetry, poetry. Oh, if, amid his poetry, he would but remember me!"

She found no more. Some of the drawers in the escritoire were locked; what they might contain was another matter. She had found nothing up to this time which could give her any clew as to whom he loved, or whether, indeed, he loved any one at all.

She did not dare to arrange his papers as she had done at Leville;

but she showed so much taste and intelligence in her disposal of them, that Sir Clinton was much pleased.

"Mrs. Jordan," he said, "you are a *rara avis*. You have contrived to make my room look nice without driving me half mad by losing my papers."

"I am happy to have pleased you, Sir Clinton," she said.

"I am so well pleased," he replied, laughing, and it was the first time she had seen him laugh since she had entered the house—"I am so well pleased," he said, "that I shall trust the care of my room to you. You have the sense to discriminate; you do not imagine manuscript to be waste paper. Have you lived with literary people? I should imagine so from your tact."

"Yes, Sir Clinton," replied Daisy; "I lived—I kept house for a gentleman who wrote."

"What did he write?" asked Sir Clinton, with some little interest.

"That I do not know, sir. They said—people said who knew him—that he was unhappily married, and that he wrote to distract his attention from domestic miseries."

She saw her husband's face flush a dusky red; he dropped the conversation at once.

"You will take charge of my room, then," he said; "you can attend to it every morning when I am out."

"To think," she said to herself, "that he never suspects me—that he never recognizes me! How little he must care for me!"

There was nothing that she dreaded so much as that he should recognize her, yet she felt aggrieved that he did not. She hastened to her room after this conversation; she closed the door, and took off the false gray hair, the blue spectacles, and other disguises. She shook her head until the fair, brown tresses fell in their waving loveliness round her shoulders; then she looked anxiously at herself in the glass.

"Thank Heaven," she said, with peculiar piety, "that I am at least as passable as I have ever been. I had almost grown to think of myself as an old woman, and forgotten that, in my dear old home, people called me pretty Daisy Erne. Would to Heaven that I were Daisy Erne now! Lady Adair is not a happy woman."

She stretched out her round, white arms above her head; it was such a luxury to be herself again, to look at her beautiful arms and hands, to feel her shining hair loose, to see the color of her beautiful blue eyes.

"I am almost tired of being Mrs. Jordan," thought Daisy. "If I do not discover something soon, I shall go back to France, and write from there, telling my husband that I must come home; for baby's sake, he must make our marriage known—my baby, who will one day be master of all this splendor."

She dressed herself after her old fashion again. The time was drawing near when she was to discover all that she wished to know.

The morning following she went to Sir Clinton's room, arranged his papers, dusted the table, filled the inkstand, gave a look of comfort and homeliness in place of the desolation that had reigned around.

Suddenly she saw what had escaped her observation before—a pretty envelope, lying open on the table. She took it up; there

was a note inside it. Should she read it? Surely, yes; her husband had no right to letters that she could not read. She looked at the envelope; it had a sweet scent: it bore a coronet and a monogram. Daisy was quick at understanding monograms; this was "M. T.," the same initials that she had seen in those pretty books of poems. She opened it at once, and read it:

"MY DEAREST CLINTON,—We shall be glad to see you to-morrow, and our pleasure will be doubled if you will look more cheerful. Miss Lockwood says you are ill. I think you must be writing a very heavy work on theology. Whatever you may be doing, let nothing keep you to-morrow from your devoted

"MAY."

She read the lines with a face that became almost ghostly in its pallor.

"May!" It flashed over her with the quickness of lightning. "May!"—it was a woman's name, just as hers was Daisy. That was why he loved the lines:

"He was weary waiting,
Waiting for the May."

And the May for whom he wearied and waited was a woman!

She need not have been so surprised, but she was quite stunned with the discovery. It would have occurred to a more suspicious nature long ago.

"May!" She hated the name. She cried out wildly who was this who had taken her husband's love from her? Pride, love, and sorrow seemed to rage together. She was a jealous wife, a loving wife, a neglected wife. Nothing could be much worse—no fate much harder to bear.

"May!" That one word seemed to stand before her in letters of fire. She must find out what followed it. She must find out who it was that her husband loved; then she should know what to do. He was to go there to-morrow; nothing was to keep him from his devoted May. Daisy forgot her assumed character.

She walked up and down the room with rapid, swift steps, her face flushed, her eyes expressing pride and indignation.

Who had dared to come between husband and wife—to take her husband's heart from her—to win him—to bid him go, and he went? Who called him "dearest Clinton," and wrote to him familiarly, as though they were lovers? She could not bear it—she would not bear it! Only let her know who this "May" was, and she would go to the very ends of the earth to find her out, and tell her that Sir Clinton Adair had a wife and child. It need not be very long before she knew. She had begged him to go on the morrow, and he would be sure to go. She had but to ask Adolphe where Sir Clinton was going; then she should follow him, and see this woman who had called him her "dearest Clinton;" who had signed herself "your devoted May."

CHAPTER XLVI.

‘I AM IN THE WAY.’

THE calm, decorous housekeeper stood near the door, all signs of agitation so carefully driven away, so carefully subdued, that not the least trace of it was visible. Daisy had said to herself that she was on the very brink of discovery; the least failure of self-control, and it was all over forever. So she stood before him mute, silent, watchful, although her heart was breaking, and her whole soul in despair. She had gone to her husband, as usual, for orders. The expression on her face was thoughtfully sad. He did not seem to see her, but to be looking at something afar off.

“You will dine at home to-day, Sir Clinton?” she said, though she knew quite well that he would not.

A sudden light came in his eyes, a smile to his lips; his thoughts had evidently flown to the reason *why* he would not be at home—a tender, loving smile that made his wife’s heart ache and throb with jealous pain.

“Not to-day, Mrs. Jordan. I shall be absent the whole day. I shall lunch and dine with my friends.”

She had known it before, but that did not prevent a terrible twinge of pain.

“There will be no need, then, for me to prepare anything this evening?” she said.

“No,” he replied; “I shall not be at home until late.”

She went away. It was well for her that Sir Clinton’s thoughts were elsewhere, or he must have noticed the ghastly pallor of her face. She closed the door, feeling a kind of silent rage even in the midst of her despair—angry that she could not upbraid him—that she could not speak her mind to him.

She watched him in silence. To those in the house she appeared to be engrossed in her duties; in reality she was watching him. She knew when he went upstairs and dressed; she noted that he occupied more time than usual with his dressing; she saw how handsome he looked when he was quitting the house, going to her rival, the woman who had stolen him from her—the rival who called herself “his devoted May.”

She must find out who this “May” was. How to set about it she hardly knew. She passed Adolphe on the stairs, and, stopping, she made some little complimentary remark to him. The valet was decidedly pleased. She asked him into the housekeeper’s room to take a glass of cordial. He was more than pleased. She talked to him first on indifferent subjects, then she said to him:

“Sir Clinton looks very nice this morning, something like a brave wooer, but that I suppose he has no one to woo.”

“If he has any secrets, he knows how to keep them,” said the valet. “On my word, Mrs. Jordan, I can not tell whether he goes wooing or not.”

"You do quite right in saying so," she said; "I have great respect for a trusted servant who keeps his master's counsel."

He looked up at her in wonder; she had not spoken in her usual tone of voice, nor did she speak in her usual manner.

"I wish," continued Adolphe, "that Sir Clinton would marry; he would be more cheerful."

"Then," thought Daisy, "it is quite evident that even this trusted and confidential servant knows nothing of his marriage with me."

As though suddenly struck by the idea, she said:

"Where is Sir Clinton gone to-day? He did say something, but I have quite forgotten what."

"He has gone to Cliffe House," was the reply.

"Cliffe House! Ah, that is where May—May, what do they call her?—lives."

"Lady May Trevlyn," said the valet.

Daisy thought of the initials "M. T.:"

"Yes, Lady May Trevlyn," she repeated, in a voice so strange and unnatural that the man looked at her in surprise.

"What do people say about Sir Clinton and Lady May?" she asked, trying to speak carelessly.

The valet laughed.

"If they had anything to say, it might have been said years ago. If Sir Clinton wanted to marry her, he could have married her, there is nothing to prevent it. I have heard that she refused many a great man for his sake."

"You think, then, that she likes him?" said Daisy, eagerly.

"There can be no harm in saying what every one knows," said Adolphe. "I do certainly think that Lady Trevlyn likes him. I can not tell whether Sir Clinton returns the compliment or not. The truth is, people have given over talking about it; we used to wonder a great deal; we do not wonder now."

How easily she could have explained it; how easily she could have said, "I know why he can not marry her; I am his wife, and far away in France we have a little child." But Daisy said nothing—the conversation seemed to die of itself, and she spoke of something else. After a few minutes she said:

"I have some shopping to do this morning; I think that I will go at once."

Adolphe thanked her very politely for the cordial, then went away.

Daisy resolved to go at once. She must see Cliffe House; she could not rest until the outer aspect of the place was known to her; she would go in her disguise; she would not run the risk of any recognition or discovery yet. She put on the bonnet and cloak she had purchased and started out. First she had to make out where Cliffe House was. "Hyde Park way" was, after all, a very vague direction—she went into a stationer's shop and asked. After some little difficulty it was found, and she received full directions for it. She went the greater part of the way in a cab, and was put down at some little distance from the place; then she went on to the opposite side of the road and looked up at it—a grand mansion—one of the palatial London mansions, with balconies filled with flowers—a bright, sunny-looking house.

Daisy walked slowly up and down opposite to it. Who would

notice her? Who would think of her? Hot, bitter tears fell from behind the veil, deep sobs came to her lips; she felt utterly heart-broken, utterly desolate. What was she like—the rival who lived here, and had won her husband from her?

Just at that moment two grooms came round with two superb horses, and Daisy paused; she went a little way further down the road, then stood as though she were waiting for some one to join her.

She saw her husband come out first from the hall door. He spoke a word or two to one of the grooms. Then out came a lady—beautiful, with a royal grace and beauty that awed Daisy. She had hair of golden sheen, and a wonderful face—lovely, fair, high-bred, with a queenly calm of manner. She was daintily attired in a riding-habit and a coquettish hat, with a rich, dark plume. Daisy looked at her. Surely this was Lady May, who had stolen her husband's heart from her—Lady May, who called herself "his, devotedly;" that beautiful, radiant woman. No need to ask if he loved her. He did not look the same being as the silent, gloomy man she had seen that morning engrossed in his own thoughts. She had never seen him like this—gay, with a charming ease and animation of manner—smiling, happy, with sunshine in his eyes and on his lips, all called forth by the woman who loved him, and whom he loved. No need to ask—the way in which he spoke to her, looked at her, helped her mount—the way in which he placed the dainty reins in her hands. Before mounting himself, he stood for two or three minutes talking to her. No need to ask—it was as though his face caught its reflection from hers.

"They love each other," thought Daisy; "and they can not marry because I am in the way."

Then he mounted, and they rode away together in the sunlight, laughing gayly, leaving a broken heart behind.

"They love each other," repeated Daisy; "and I am in the way."

You have heard, reader, of people being stricken for death, perhaps months before they die. Those who tell the story of their last sickness will tell you that at a certain time a strange gray look came over their faces, a strange chill came over their limbs, a shiver that seemed to freeze the blood, a peculiar glassy look in the eyes—relating these symptoms, those who observe them will say, "I knew that meant death."

So it was now. Daisy—Lady Adair—as she watched her husband ride away with the woman he loved, was stricken for death. Passers-by looked in wonder at the pale, stricken face, with that peculiar gray look on it—she herself felt the shiver in her veins, the icy hand on her heart. She stood still for some time with this hand of death upon her. Then she looked no more at the brilliant mansion or the sun-lit road, but went home—sick unto death with sorrow and despair.

This was his secret. He loved Lady May Trevlyn, and she stood between them—but for her he could marry this beautiful, queenly woman, which was what he wanted. This is why he was so willing to leave her in France—why he had never mentioned his marriage—why he was always wretched and unhappy.

She walked slowly home. The mystery was solved now; he had

forgotten her, Daisy, his wife, the simple girl who had worshiped him—forgotten her. She was but in the way, a burden to him, the barrier between himself and this fair, imperial woman whom he loved—forgotten the little child far away in France. Her heart seemed to ache more painfully than she could bear. They were forgotten—he loved no one except this lovely, high-born Lady May.

“Why did he marry me?” she moaned. “If he had gone away and left me, I should have died, but that would have been better than this; I should have died, and my mother would have buried me in the pretty green church-yard; the green grass and white daisies would have been growing over my head, but I should have been at peace.”

When she reached home she sat down to rest; her limbs trembled; she had no strength. It was only what she had expected; but now that the blow had fallen, it was almost more than she could bear.

“Why did he marry me?” sobbed the unhappy girl.

She thought over that brief, wretched married life of hers, remembering the first blind raptures of worship, when she had not known or thought but that he loved her—when she had been quite content with her own adoration, and had expected nothing from him—when she had slowly, but surely, awoke to the fact that he did not love her—that he was different to all other husbands, that she had nothing to do with his life. Then came suspicion and discontent. She had found that he had deceived her; she had grown tired of his neglect and indifference, determined to solve the mystery, and know for herself what he did in England, and why he did not bring her.

She knew it all now. The last faint gleam had died out of her heart—she knew it. The only thing that remained for her now was to see what was best to be done. She loved him better than herself; unkind and neglectful as he was, she loved him better than anything or any one in the world. She stretched out her hands with a bitter cry.

“Oh, my love—my love!” she said, “I would have died for you, and you have forgotten me!”

CHAPTER XLVII.

“I WILL HAVE JUSTICE.”

WHAT was she to do? That was the question which puzzled her. How could she free him, so as to make him happy with this beautiful woman whom he loved? Tears rained from her face as she remembered the lines that he loved—“He was weary, waiting for the May;” but the May he longed for was not the sweet month of leaves and blossoms; it was a lovely, golden-haired lady. He was wearied of waiting; and it was through her that he had to wait at all. If she were not in the way, he could marry Lady May.

“He must hate me,” she thought. “Why did he marry me? He must hate me, and wish me dead.”

Dead! The word struck her. What calm rest, what unbroken sleep comes to the dead!—no wear and tear of life, no jealousy, no pain, no sorrow; nothing but deep, calm, sweet, unbroken rest.

"Dead!" Why, death was the only way in which she could free herself and him. She knew there was such a thing as divorce, but, then, it must follow wrong doing; they would not give it for a mistaken marriage.

"If it were not wrong," thought Daisy, "I would kill myself. If I could go to heaven, I would cheerfully give up life."

But that could not be if she took her own life, she should never see the face of God. Then there was the little baby—the sweet, laughing, cooing baby—with tiny pink hands and dimpled feet. She must not leave that. Baby had but herself; his father cared little for it—all his heart was with Lady May.

All that day Daisy sat in her room trying to think what she should do. Should she go to him and upbraid him—tell him she knew all—she had found out his love for Lady May? Should she insist upon his making their marriage public at once, and introducing her to the world as his wife? Ah, no; for if she did any of these things, he would only hate her the more.

"I can not endure that," thought Daisy. "He does not love me, but I could not bear that he should hate me."

Besides which, she had no proper grounds for accusation. No one had told her that he loved the Lady May; after all, it was principally her own surmise. She was confident of it after seeing them together. Should she write a letter to Lady May, telling her that Sir Clinton Adair was married—and that he had a wife and child in France? She looked a proud and lofty lady, one who would scorn even to look at an anonymous letter. Should she write to him? She was puzzled what to do. Of one thing she was quite resolved—this should not go on; she must have it ended. The best, the wisest plan would be to see them both together. When? was the next question. That she could decide later on; she would not hurry her fate by any precipitation. She would have no scene by which the world could be enlightened, but she would have justice for herself and her child. He might not love them, but he should not look at this fair woman with his heart in his eyes.

How that day passed Daisy never knew. Under pretext of indisposition, she remained in her own room; she could not have borne the sound of voices or the sight of faces—her heart was broken with the tragedy of her own life. Sometimes she thought she would creep home to the baby, and die without one word of what she had discovered. She was almost tired of the useless, weary struggle.

She could not hope now for his life, not even in the long years to come; her child's pretty prattle and pretty ways would not purchase it for her.

"And I can not wonder at it," she thought, with her rare sweetness of humility. "I am not to be compared to her; she is beautiful beyond most women. She is a lady, high-born, high-bred; I am only a country girl. No wonder that he loves her best. Why did he marry me?"

Once she thought it was just possible all this might be a mistake. Perhaps Lady May was related to him; they might be cousins; she could not tell; she would ask. If they were related, ever so distantly, that would account for the friendship between them.

She might have known how passionately she loved her husband

from the relief that even that faint suspicion gave her. It gave her strength to leave her room, to go down-stairs and talk to Adolphe again. All in the most casual way, she asked him if Sir Clinton had any relatives in London; and the answer was "No." Then she said:

"Is not Lady May Trevlyn a distant relative of his?"

"No," said Adolphe. "You seem curious over Lady Trevlyn, Mrs. Jordan," he said. "I will tell you all I know about it, and this was told me by one of her household. Some years ago, when she was a young girl, they were engaged to be married—they were lovers; then they quarreled—I have never heard how or why—they quarreled and parted. Sir Clinton went away—went by himself, taking no servants with him. I had been living with him three years then, and I knew no more than the others did about him. We all received a message through his solicitors that we were to remain on board wages. I have not myself the faintest idea where he went. It was nearly three years before he returned to England; then he was so terribly changed—his face had grown older, and his eyes had a dim, dazed look, such as you see sometimes in the face of a man whom sorrow has driven mad."

She rose from her seat with a little cry.

"What is it?" asked Adolphe.

"Nothing," she replied, faintly; "a pain here at my heart; it is gone now, quite gone. Go on, Adolphe; you talk like a story-book."

"I am pleased to interest you, Mrs. Jordan," said the polite valet; "but I have little more to tell. Sir Clinton came back, looking years older, haggard and care-worn. Every one was delighted to see him, and welcomed him warmly. He met Lady May again, and they became friends. Every one expected that they would marry; but they have not done so, and I do not think that any one knows the reason why. I do not, and I am Sir Clinton's trusted servant."

"How strange!" murmured Daisy.

"Yes, it is strange; for it is well known that Lady May refused some excellent offers. We quite expected every day to hear the marriage announced. He visits the house, he goes everywhere with her; but there has been no such announcement yet, and, I begin to think, never will. If they meant to marry, they would have done so long before this. I do not think there will ever be a marriage now."

"Yet they are supposed to care for each other," said Daisy.

"That is the mystery; that is what the world can not understand."

"It is like a riddle," said Daisy, lightly, as she turned away; "no one can guess it."

She spoke lightly, but the very bitterness of death was in her heart. She could understand it all now; it was plain as the pages of an open book. He had loved her, and they had quarreled; the quarrel with her whom he loved so intensely, was the sorrow which had driven him mad; he had, no doubt, fallen in the woods where she found him, half dead with fatigue and misery. That part of the story was plain enough to her; she could imagine, too, how, having returned to England and finding his beautiful love true and

faithful to him, the old charm had been redoubled. What she could not imagine was why he had married her. That was the fatal mistake; but for that he would have been happy enough—he would have married Lady May. That was the grand mistake, the great blunder, the one error which could never be remedied. Why had he done it? He had evidently never ceased to love Lady May. They had not been married very long when she had wondered so at his emotion over the lines “Waiting for the May.” It was his beautiful love of whom he was thinking then, she knew; he had never ceased to love her; then why had he married any one else? That was the only mystery left now in the whole story. It could not have been that he loved her—that was not possible; he had asked her to be his wife, to marry him; but he had never said much about love; besides which, any faint, feeble affection that he had for her, was nothing compared to the intensity of his love for Lady May.

“Why did he marry me?” cried the unhappy girl, wringing her hands.

Better a thousand times to be sleeping under the daisies than to be here—better to be dead, than living to shut out all hope of happiness for herself. No idea of the truth occurred to her; no suspicion that he had married her from an impulse of manly kindness and generosity. She bewildered herself in trying to discover how it was.

He had evidently repented of it, for he had taken no steps to introduce her to any one—indeed, no one here in England knew anything about her. A sudden flush of anger burned her face; her passionate, despairing love gave place to angry pride. She felt that, let him have what excuse he might, he had spoiled her life without having any motive for it.

Then Daisy was compelled to leave her thoughts and go downstairs, where a variety of duties no one else could perform were waiting for her—duties that she began to loathe.

“It will not be for much longer,” she said to herself; “I will take good care of that.”

She loathed this great, splendid house, with its profusion and luxury; it seemed to her to embody one of the reasons why he had not proclaimed his marriage with her. She fancied he was ashamed to introduce her, ashamed to show her as the mistress of all his wealth.

“I can do without it,” said Daisy, with a curling lip; “I do not want it, but I will have justice for myself and my child.”

A most unfortunate idea came to her then; it was that he had married her to avenge himself on Lady May, and then, when the deed was done, he had not the courage to avow it. Daisy felt that she had solved the problem at last—she had never been loved, never been cared for. She was but a means of revenge; her heart, her life, her love had been as nothing. He had married her to avenge himself on his beautiful lady love; then, when his courage failed him, he had carefully kept her out of sight.

“And my life,” said the girl, “has gone for nothing—gone for the whim of an hour—my life, that is so much to me, and so little to any one else.”

She felt quite sure that she understood it all now, that the whole

story lay open before her; and a vehement desire for justice took possession of her.

"I will make him own me as his wife before her," she said. "I will make him tell me in her presence why he married me. I will have justice as I have never had love."

It was late before Sir Clinton returned; she, sitting, watching the hours with jealous eyes, knew how late. Ah, well, it would not be for much longer. She thought Heaven was very merciful; there was plenty of room for her in heaven, although no one wanted her on earth. She would have justice; then she would go home to her baby and die.

"I will pray so earnestly for death," she said to herself, "that Heaven will never refuse to hear me."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

A SURPRISE IMMINENT.

THE housekeeper did not go the next morning as usual for her orders; she sent Margerie in her place, who, in answer to Sir Clinton's polite inquiries, replied that Mrs. Jordan was not well. He was sorry, but he was going out again, so that he begged she would not give herself any trouble that day on his account.

Daisy was really ill—not in any danger, but wearied out with emotion and suspense. Her head ached so painfully that she could not endure the light; when she tried to rise it was as though her strength failed her, and she had the good sense to perceive that unless she rested in time she might possibly have a severe illness—such rest as it was, when every thought was pain, and the strongest feeling she was capable of was an intense longing to die.

It was four days before she rose again; then she felt strangely weak and ill. One of the first things she did was to go to Sir Clinton's study, which had been neglected during her absence. It did not look as though he had been much in it. There were some letters scattered about, but that which angered her most, and brought matters to a crisis, was that she saw on the mantel-piece a letter from France, from herself, that had been, by the post-mark upon it, lying there for four days, and was still unopened. It was dusty and dirty; it had evidently lain there unopened ever since it came. That was the climax. As she held that letter in her hands all gentler feelings seemed to die out of Daisy's heart; her face burned with anger, her heart beat fast, her hands trembled, her sweet face was not at that moment pleasant to see.

"So," she said, slowly, "it is even too much trouble to open my letters now. It might have been to tell him that baby was ill, to ask him to come—it might have been most important; no matter, he had no time to read it; he remembers nothing but Lady May; there is no thought, no care, no consideration for me. Now I will have justice; there has been no mercy shown to me, I will show none. I will find out where he is, and confront him with her."

Adolphe was not in the house, but one of the footmen gave her all the information that she required. Of course he was gone to

Cliffe House; the pity was he could not live there. A bitter smile curled her lips.

"I need hardly have asked the question," she thought; "where is it likely he should be? He has no time to read my letter, he has to go to Cliffe House. If I wanted anything to nerve me, this will; if my courage fails me, I have but to remember that my life was less than nothing to him, that he has spoiled it for a whim, that he married me as an act of vengeance, and then had not the courage to carry out his revenge. I have but to think of my own broken heart and my little child's face. I shall have courage for anything then. Good-by to Mrs. Jordan! Good-by to Liffdale House! Stay—for my child's sake, no one must know that I have been here. I will go, and leave no traces; they may say the housekeeper left suddenly and without cause, but they will never connect the housekeeper with Lady Adair. What a mockery it seems to think that I am Lady Adair!"

She went for the last time to her room, impatiently enough; she pulled off the false gray hair; she had all her senses about her; she burned the gray front lest it should be found; the white caps he left in the bureau drawer. In her box she had one dress that she had purchased in case of any such contingency as this, a dress of black velvet; it was some relief to throw off the quaint costume that had disguised the grace and elegance of her beautiful figure, and array herself once more in a dress that suited her youthful beauty. Even in the midst of her sadness and despair Daisy did not forget that; she looked fair enough for any man to love; with that flush on her flower-like face, that light of resolution in her eyes, fair and graceful as woman need be. Yet she laughed as she looked at that reflection of herself; what did it matter how fair she was? he would never love her, never care for her; the woman he loved was a thousand times more beautiful than she.

It seemed so strange going through the streets in her own character. She did not notice the admiring glances bent on her, the admiring eyes that followed her. She thought only of finding her husband at Cliffe House. Many a passer-by stopped to look at this beautiful fair-haired woman in the black velvet dress, whose face was so unconscious, and whose eyes seemed to look so far away. Daisy passed on, the sun was shining brightly, the sky was blue, the western wind sweet and calm; the people looked happy and prosperous, the little children were all at play.

She never saw the sunlit streets, or heard the sound of the children at their play; a strange idea had taken possession of her. She was wondering how a condemned criminal walks from his cell to the scaffold; how short the way must seem to him, with death at the end; how his eyes must linger on the darkened walls, on the living faces near him, so soon—oh, Heaven, so soon—to pass from before him forever. She felt like that now; she was walking to her doom. What matter the sunshine and the cheerful sounds? there was death at the end; for it would be death to stand before him and accuse him—to hear him, perhaps, repudiate her—perhaps deny all knowledge of her; and, if he did not do that, to curse her for coming. There could never be death for her worse than this, the slaying of her love.

On, with quick steps that never faltered. There in the distance she saw the iron railings against which she leaned that day in her agony when she first saw Lady May; the day and hour on which the hand of death had seized her. On, with a courage that grew greater with every step. She was going to seek for justice, not only for herself, but for her little child in far-off France; the child who had never known a father's love or a father's care. And there were tears in her eyes, tears raining down her face, tears burning her where they fell. Tears! She raised her head proudly. She had not known that she was weeping; it must have been with thinking of her little one, who had no one to love him but his mother.

"I will not face my enemies with tears on my face," said Daisy. It had come to that at last; the husband she had loved so dearly, whom she had worshiped with all the love of her girlish heart, was her enemy. They should never see that she had been weeping. She would appear before them grand and stately as the proud lady who had won her husband's heart; she had her own dignity to maintain—she was a true wife, and she was mother of the heir of Eastwold. It was for those who had injured her, to give way to fear and to yield—not herself. She turned aside for a few minutes, that the wind might efface all traces of her tears.

"I shall hate myself if I cry," she said. "I want justice, not pity."

So she stood for some few minutes.

"I wish," she thought, "that I could put all my tears safely away, to be quite sure that none will disgrace me."

Then when her cold, proud calm had returned, she walked toward the house. When she had rung the bell, and knew that her admittance was quite certain, her heart beat painfully fast; her face lost some of its color, but she would not give in.

"I have to face my enemies," she said. "I have come here for justice, not for pity."

A tall footman opened the door, and bowed respectfully when he saw the beautiful, fair-haired woman in the black dress.

"I want to see Lady Trevlyn," said Daisy, in a firm voice. "I know that she is at home."

"Her ladyship is at home, but she is engaged," was the reply.

"Yes," said Daisy; "Sir Clinton Adair is here—I have to meet him here."

"I will tell my lady," said the man.

But Daisy, admitted once into the hall, placed a couple of sovereigns into his hand.

"I do not want you to announce me," she said; "I want you simply to show me the door of the room where Lady May is. I know Sir Clinton well—you need have no fear."

"It is a very unusual thing to do," said the man. "My lady may be displeased."

"No," replied Daisy, still carelessly, "not with you, I can promise you—not with you. Will you do it for me?"

"If you will take the blame," said the servant.

"There will be no blame," she replied. "I will undertake to answer for it that neither Sir Clinton nor Lady Trevlyn will ever ask who opened the door for me."

He hesitated for one minute, and he looked scrutinizingly at the beautiful, fair-haired lady whose black velvet dress was so rich and tasteful. She looked like a perfect lady; there was nothing ill-bred, nothing *outré* about her; then she had lovely blue eyes, and they were looking very imploringly at him. He was but a mortal man.

"Pray forgive me, madam," he said. "Lady Trevlyn is very particular. I had orders to say that her ladyship was not at home."

"I know," interrupted Daisy, "but I am quite sure that she would be at home to me if she knew that I was here."

It angered her to hear that her beautiful rival appropriated her husband so entirely; evidently she would allow of no interruption when Sir Clinton was with her. That only made her more determined. She looked at the footman with an irresistible smile.

"I am a relative of Sir Clinton Adair's, and I have come some distance to see him. I will take care that you are held blameless. I pray you to show me the room."

The man bowed.

"Her ladyship is in the drawing-room," he said; "that is the door at the end of the hall; shall I open it for you?"

"No," said Daisy, "I prefer to open it myself; you need not fear the least in the world."

She smiled so carelessly that the man was reassured. It was a most unusual thing to ask—an unusual thing to do. There could be no harm in it; she was a relative of Sir Clinton—perhaps she wanted to give him a surprise.

There was one thing he could do, and, not being overburdened with conscience, he decided upon doing it; he could go out of the way, and, if any inquiries were made as to who opened the door, no one saw him do it, and he could be silent.

"She is a lovely woman," he said to himself; "but I do not remember to have seen her face among any of our people."

In the meantime Daisy had opened the door.

CHAPTER XLIX.

SIR CLINTON'S CONFESSION.

DAISY had opened the door gently. With one keen, comprehensive glance she took in the whole of the scene before her. It was a small, pretty room, this morning-room of Lady May, with long, low windows that opened on to a narrow lawn, where flowers seemed to bloom by magic all the year round. At the window she saw two figures—those of her husband and Lady May—her husband standing with a troubled look on his face, yet with something almost approaching adoration in the eyes that rested on the lovely upturned face. One jeweled hand rested on his shoulder. She had evidently been talking to him earnestly. At the sound of the open door they both turned round. Lady May looked in wonder at the beautiful, fair-haired woman standing there with an angry light in her eyes.

Sir Clinton uttered one low cry. They heard him say, "My God!" then take one step forward.

"Daisy!" he cried, "what, in Heaven's name, brings you here?"

Lady May looked on in wonder that was almost alarm. Who was this? She advanced to speak to her, and Daisy looked at the tall, beautiful, stately girl, whose rich dress swept the floor, and whose golden hair shone like an aureole.

"Do you want me?" she asked. "I am Lady Trevlyn."

"Yes," said Daisy, "I wished to speak to you."

"Daisy," cried Sir Clinton, "what does this mean? Why have you followed me here?"

"To seek justice," she replied—"justice, not pity, not indulgence—I want justice!"

Lady May looked from one to the other in wonder. Who was this who dared to speak so to Sir Clinton—who dared to address him in these terms? Then she looked at her lover. He had grown ghastly pale—so pale that she was alarmed for him. Who was she? What did it mean? She saw that he tried to speak, but all sound died on his lips—nothing escaped them. Then Lady May spoke again, and her clear voice fell so distinctly on their ears that both looked toward her.

"You wanted me," she said. "I am at your service—I do not remember you."

"You have never seen me," said Daisy. "I am a stranger to you—you know my husband well. I am Lady Adair."

No word from the wretched man.

Lady May looked up with a sudden gleam of anger in her face.

"Lady Adair!" she repeated. "Pardon me, are you sure there is no mistake?"

"I am quite sure," replied Daisy; "and my husband, Sir Clinton, does not deny it. Ask him if you do not believe me."

"I do not believe you," said Lady May. "I would not believe you on your oath."

"Appeal to Sir Clinton," said Daisy.

They both turned to him at the same moment.

"Caro," said Daisy, "speak—am I your wife or not?"

"Clinton," said Lady May, "tell me if this be true?"

He flung up his arms with a bitter cry, then, laying them on the table, hid his face in them, and silence fell over all three.

Those two fair women watched each other—the beautiful, fair-haired Daisy with an angry flush on her face, Lady May calm as a high-bred, imperial queen. They seemed, as it were, each to criticise the other—to take in the details of each other's beauty. Then Lady May, with a cold, polished smile, said:

"You see, he does not own it."

Daisy replied:

"He does not deny it."

"I will believe," said Lady May, "that you have gone mad. I will believe that you are wicked, false, designing—that the whole world is mad—but I will never believe one word against the honor and loyalty of Sir Clinton Adair."

"And I," said Daisy, "believe in Heaven, but I have little faith in man now—in Sir Clinton Adair. I am his wife; he does not deny it."

Then the unhappy man stood up; he stretched out imploring hands to Lady May.

"I dare not ask you to forgive me," he said; "my sin is beyond all pardon; I have no excuse to offer."

She looked with her clear eyes into the very depths of his.

"I will take no other word than yours, Clinton," she said. "Is what this lady urges true?"

"Yes," he replied; and again a terrible silence came over them.

"True!" said Lady May, at last—"true! You have been here, thought by all to be my lover, yet you were married all the time. Oh, Clinton, it can not be true! I would sooner believe Heaven false, myself mad, than you disloyal. It can not be true!"

"It is true, my darling," said Sir Clinton.

Daisy looked up with an angry face.

"My husband has no right to call you darling, Lady Trevlyn," she said. "He belongs to me, not to you."

"You are right," said the beautiful girl, calmly. "True, Clinton—did you say that it was really true?"

"Heaven help us, May, it is true! I am a coward—a traitor. I hate myself, I loathe myself. I—yes, it is true."

Then, without a word, Lady May turned from them. She walked back to the window, where so lately she had stood in all trust and loving faith. Perhaps no woman ever passed through such anguish as overpowered her then. Sir Clinton had bowed his white face again, and hidden it with his hands. Daisy stood erect and defiant, but the pride and anger were dying out of her face as she saw the misery of Lady May.

The beautiful heiress, the flattered, courted woman, she who had refused some of the noblest men in England—the lovely Lady May—stood silent, enduring pain and anguish more bitter than falls to the lot of women—more bitter than death.

A commonplace woman would have given him up to his fate—would have made common cause against him—would have heaped reproaches and insults on him—would have taunted him. She did none of these things. His perfidy shocked her; the knowledge of his deceit grieved her; but, far above all selfish pain, far above all thought of vengeance, soared the high and lofty love of her life. She had plenty of cause to turn round and heap bitter words upon him, plenty of right to retaliate on him, but he was the lover of her girlhood, crushed with the sense of his misery, beaten down, humiliated, and disgraced. She was sorry for herself, more sorry by far for him. She could understand all now—his care-worn face, his haggard, sorrowful expression, his constant depression—the reason why he had hovered round her, yet had never spoken to her of love; and then she remembered that, although he had returned to England, it was not he who had sought her, but she who had gone to him—who had knelt at his feet, clasping her white arms round him, calling him by every loving name she could remember; it was she who had wooed him. It might be that when he returned to England he had no thought of seeing her—he had, perhaps, intended to avoid her. She remembered how often he had tried to speak to her of that past, and she had steadily refused to listen to him. All these were miserable excuses for such a sin—miserable, spurious excuses,

but they were true. Her heart went out to him in great, boundless pity; her love seemed to leave the region of self and go into something higher and better; a great sense of kindness came over her. After all, she thought, it was her own fault. He had always loved her better than life itself; her coquetry had driven him from her, and she had wooed him back. The past returned to her in vivid colors, and she was just enough to own that the greater part of the wrong lay with herself. She rose into heroism then—that flattered, courted, lovely lady—she forgot herself to think of him—she lost sight of her own anguish in his. She left her standing-place by the window and went up to him. She held out her hands to him.

“Clinton,” she said, calmly, “this is my fault, not yours.”

He looked up at her with wild, burning eyes.

“Oh, my darling!” he cried.

“Hush!” she said, gently; “you must not use such words to me—they belong to your wife. Clinton, it is my fault. Now, before the evil grows greater, let us remedy it.”

She laid her hand for one half minute on the handsome head, bent in such humble humiliation before her, and all the love of her heart and soul seemed to go out to him in that one touch.

“Clinton, look up; let us remedy the evil. Remember, I sought you—you did not seek me. I will speak to Lady Adair.”

He looked at the noble, beautiful face with unutterable anguish; he tried to speak to her; but he could frame no words.

Then Lady May went to Daisy. She held out her hands to her in kindly greeting.

“Let us help him, Lady Adair,” she said; “he is in great distress.”

Daisy’s pride and anger had melted away; they had never been very strong; they gave place now to infinite pity and infinite love.

“I have no wish to be hard—to be unkind,” she said; “but I must have justice—justice for myself and my little child.”

Lady May recanted for half a minute; a spasm of pain passed over her face.

“A child!” she said. “Have you a little child, Lady Adair?”

“Yes,” replied Daisy, “I have a lovely little boy; but Sir Clinton does not love him; he does not love me—he loves nothing in the wide world but you, and it is not just, it is not fair.”

“You are quite right,” said Lady May; “it is not just nor fair. You shall have full justice, Lady Adair.”

She bravely trampled her own pains, her wounded love, her dismay and horror, under her feet, resolving to think only of him, and to do him good. She must, she knew, conciliate this beautiful, fair-haired woman before her.

“We must help him,” she said, aloud; “he is very unhappy, and he has suffered much.”

“He is very unhappy because he has married me,” said Daisy, simply. “I can not help it; I can not imagine why he did it. It seems to me that he has always loved you.”

“He has loved me very much,” said Lady May, with equal frankness. “What was the pretty name I heard your husband”—her voice faltered over the words—“I heard your husband,” she repeated, firmly, “call you by? Was it Daisy?”

"Yes," replied Lady Adair, "my name is Daisy."

"Then, Daisy," said Lady May, "we must be friends, not foes. Will you not come with me where I can talk to you? I have much to say to you. Come away from Sir Clinton, where we can talk about him at our ease—that we can not do in his presence."

"I will go anywhere with you," said Daisy.

Her heart began to warm to this beautiful, high-bred woman, whose voice was like sweetest music.

She went up to her husband and laid her hand on his arm.

"Caro," she said, "you are not angry with me?"

"No," he replied, in a low voice; "perhaps it is better so. I am not angry, Daisy. Heaven knows there is no room in my heart for anything but shame."

Without another word, the two ladies quitted the room together, leaving him to his thoughts.

CHAPTER L.

THE TWO LOVES.

THEY walked in silence across the hall; then Lady May turned, with a smile, to Daisy.

"We will go to the drawing room," she said; "there is no one at home to-day but myself. We can talk uninterruptedly there."

Then Daisy saw that she must have suffered terribly, for the color had died from her beautiful face, leaving it pale as death.

They entered the beautiful drawing-room. The familiar aspect of the room, where she had spent so many happy hours with the man whom she believed to be her lover, for one minute seemed to overcome Lady May; she battled hard with the faintness that oppressed her.

There would be plenty of time, she thought, to bear her pain when all hope of helping him was over.

She must wait until then. She put it from her resolutely; she would not look it in the face. Time enough for it during the long years that stretched out hopelessly before her.

She closed the door carefully; then turned, with a faint smile on her colorless face, to Daisy.

"We both love Sir Clinton," she said; "we love him too much to do anything that would injure him; we both desire his benefit—nothing else; so, Daisy, shall you and I be friends?"

She came near Lady Adair as she spoke, with a charming, caressing smile; but Daisy shrunk back.

"It is very hard," she said, frankly, "to be friends with one whom your husband loves better than yourself."

"Hear me, Daisy," pleaded Lady May. They were standing together then, side by side, these two women who both loved the same man—Lady May imperially lovely in her calm, high-bred style; Lady Adair beautiful, restless, and agitated. "Hear me, Daisy; you must not—you shall not judge until you hear all."

Daisy looked up at her; it seemed so natural for her to command, The lovely face seemed made to be revered.

"I do not wonder," said Daisy, slowly, "that he loves you better than me; you are a thousand times more beautiful."

"I do not think so, nor do I think that he loves me so much the best. Daisy, shall we be friends?"

"I have never thought of being friends with you," she replied. "How can I? You have won my husband's heart from me; I do not see how I can be your friend; he thinks of nothing but Lady May."

"You must be just to me, Daisy; remember that I did not know he was your husband. I have no desire to excuse myself; but remember that I want to tell you all about my—my friendship for your husband; but I can not do so unless you promise that we shall be friends."

Daisy did not seem willing, and an expression of pain came over the beautiful face of Lady May.

"Daisy," she said pleadingly, "you will not surely refuse me—I, who am only anxious for your husband's sake and yours to be of use to you."

But Daisy had hardly studied the elegancies of life; the idea of veiling any unpleasant truth did not occur to her.

"I do not see," she replied, honestly, "how you can expect me to be what you call friends, Lady Trevlyn. It was for you that my husband left me, because he longed to see your face. I remember the words—he was 'weary, weary, waiting for the May.' I understand it all by instinct, as it were. He would be glad if I were dead, that he might be free; and if I could, I would die."

"To leave your little child?"

"Do you think," asked Daisy, with sudden passion, "that my child is a source of anything but pain to me? He has his father's eyes, Lady Trevlyn, and those eyes, so full of love for you, have never looked with anything but indifference at me. He has his father's lips, and I never touch them but that I remember my husband never voluntarily caressed me in his life."

Lady May knew it was wrong; but it was almost impossible to help feeling some trifling degree of pleasure at hearing this—it was some little balm to her outraged pride. Daisy went on eagerly:

"I love my little boy, but I have always to remember that he has no father's love. Ah, Lady Trevlyn, talk of hardships! I thought my heart would have broken when I first saw my husband look at my child. There was no love in his eyes, no pleasure in his face."

"Poor child!" said Lady May, softly; "poor mother! it was very hard for you."

That little touch of sympathy did more than all her pleading. Tears were in Daisy's eyes—Daisy who intended to be so proud and calm.

"I repeat," she said, "that, if I could, I would gladly die; my only regret is that I can not. If I could go back to France, and just take my boy in my arms, and lie down with him to die!"

"You are young to be so hopeless, Daisy," said Lady May.

"Young in years; but the wife of a husband who loves another woman does not measure her life by years. It seems to me that I have lived fifty in one."

"Because you have not been happy. Now, tell me, Daisy, are you willing to be friends?"

"I do not think so," was the candid reply.

"I read a story once, Daisy, of two women who loved one man—he was a thousand times more guilty than Sir Clinton. He loved his wife, then quarreled with her; after that he went and left her; he married another woman then, and the two met. They did not punish him—they took revenge. The second wife had a child. I remember the picture where they both—these two injured women—sat loving the child. Oh, Daisy, Daisy! think of the love and forbearance there, the pity, the generosity—think of it! Should you and I quarrel after that?"

Daisy raised her sweet, sad eyes to Lady May's face.

"If," she said, slowly—"if I died, Lady Trevlyn, should you hate my child?"

Lady May looked at her eagerly.

"Hate your child, Daisy—Sir Clinton's little son! What do you think of me? No. If you died—and I pray Heaven with all my heart that you may live, dear—but if you died, I would take your child to my heart as though he were my own."

Daisy's face softened as she heard the words.

"Would you? Then you are very good, Lady Trevlyn."

"Daisy," said Lady May, "you have had a hard life, cruelly hard. Let me teach you something, dear—do not turn your face from me—let me teach you to believe in nobility of nature, in generosity of heart, in loyalty and good faith. The world calls us rivals, I suppose, although a wife can have no rival!—her place must be her husband's heart; we should be called rivals, I suppose, because we have both loved the same man. Now, across this bridge of rivalry, I offer you, in all love, and truth, and honor, my hand, my friendship. Will you accept it?"

"I would so much rather not," said Daisy. "If I touch your hand, I should be compelled to keep my word, and like you. How can I, when my husband likes you best?"

An expression of deep pain came over Lady May's face.

"Poor child!" she said, gently; "it has been hard for you. I respect you, Daisy, more for your refusal than if you had promised, and then failed to keep your word. If you will not be friends with me, still I will trust you, Daisy. I will tell you my story and your husband's, and then you will see that there are excuses for him more powerful than any I can offer. Give me your hand, dear; let it lie so in mine. The woman who loved Sir Clinton years ago will not forget that she is speaking to Sir Clinton's wife. I knew your husband years ago, when I was a girl, only seventeen or eighteen; he was a handsome man—ah, Daisy, so different to what he is now, so different!—handsome, eager, full of life and animation. I had no other love, and never shall have. We loved each other very dearly, and we were engaged to be married then."

Lady May told the incidents of their quarrel and separation; she did not spare herself in the least; she told the truth frankly, as it had happened.

"He went away from me," she said; "and when I asked him afterward where he went, he said he had gone mad."

How well Daisy remembered it—the great sorrow that had driven him mad, that had driven him out into the woods, where she had found him, senseless and half dead. She interrupted Lady May eagerly.

“I know,” she cried; “it was then that I found him.”

“Tell me your story now,” said Lady May; and Daisy told it—how she had learned to love him in his sickness and dependence, and how it seemed to her that when he was going she must die; then of her proud happiness when he asked her to be his wife; of their home abroad, and the gradual way in which she arrived at the conclusion that he did not love her.

“Did he not love you, Daisy?” asked Lady May.

“No,” replied Daisy. “Looking back upon our life together, I feel perfectly sure that he had never even the least affection for me.”

“Then,” said Lady May, “why did he marry you?”

“That is my puzzle,” replied Daisy, eagerly. “Why, I had no money; my mother was a poor woman who worked hard for her living; I had no accomplishments, no beauty; he did not love me—why did he marry me?”

“You must have been pretty, Daisy, in a fair, sweet, child-like fashion. I can fancy what you were like two or three years ago. Now, I want to tell you what you ought, in justice to your husband, know. You tell me that he grew tired of his life in France, and came over here?”

“Yes,” said Daisy, sadly; “and I was almost happy until then.”

“I had done wrong,” said Lady May, “and I wanted to tell him so. You will not be angry with me, dear; but I found out how dearly I loved him after he had gone away. I did all I could to find out where he was, but I could not. I resolved to wait until he returned, no matter how many years he might be absent, and then beg his pardon, ask him to forgive my coquetry, and restore to me what I had lost. I made that resolve, you see—not Sir Clinton.

“I found out from the papers when he returned, and where he was. I went to him, and found him alone. Daisy, I knelt at his feet, I would not leave him until he had pardoned me. Daisy, do not be hard upon him; remember how he loved me, how pleased I was to see him, how I prayed, persuaded, pleaded; but, now that I come to think it calmly over, there was something strange in his manner from the first. He was so changed that, at times, I thought he had ceased to love me; he was so reserved, so unlike himself, that very often I was on the point of quarreling with him again.”

“But you never did?” interrupted Daisy.

“No, I never did, because I tried to be patient. I reminded myself that he had suffered greatly on my account, and that the suffering had deranged him. Now I see it all, Daisy—he could not be kinder to me because he never forgot you, his wife.”

“Do you really think that?” asked Daisy, eagerly.

“I am quite sure of it,” replied Lady May, “and I will tell you why.”

CHAPTER LI.

“WILL YOU TEACH ME.”

“I WILL tell you why,” repeated Lady May. “All the days and hours that we have passed together since his return he has never once mentioned the word love or marriage to me. On that evening when I went to him I was too much bewildered and confused to notice this; I thought him altered, cold, reserved even then; but that was nothing to the after-time. He came to Cliffe House here the day following, when I was so happy to see him—so delighted; I had so much to say to him—to tell him, and he was so cold, so silent. ‘It is all my fault,’ I kept saying to myself—‘all my fault; I injured him, and he can not forget it.’ I remember now that he seemed embarrassed and uneasy when we asked him about his absence. I, thinking he had dreamed the time away, resolved upon asking him no more. Time went on; he, more than once, hinted that he had something to tell me; little dreaming what it was, I refused to listen.

“I know all this is but a poor excuse, a wretched excuse; he ought to have told me honestly on that first evening when I was with him that he was married. It would have been a terrible blow at the time, but I should have outlived it, and I do not think it would have been worse than the constant pain since—pain that has never ceased, and never, never will; it has gone on so ever since, Daisy—I, loving him, full of pain and wonder at his silence; he, sad, drait, reserved; I, wondering why he never said he loved me—why he never spoke of marriage to me; he, silent and unhappy. I can feel for him, Daisy—he had loved me very much; he knew that I loved him, and he had not the courage to tell me that he was married. It was weak and cowardly of him—there is no excuse for him; even if the words had killed me, he was bound to have said them.”

“What should you have done if he had told you?” she asked.

“I should have been terribly pained for a time—just for a time; but I should have known that it was all my own fault; and, perhaps, in the years to come, we might have been friends—he, and you, and I. I should not have been angry; I drove him from me—I could not have blamed him.”

“He should have told you,” said Daisy, musingly.

“Yes; and then as the time went on it became more difficult. I can imagine that, when he first saw me, he did not care to dampen my joy by telling me, and that every hour which passed made it more difficult. I have wondered at him, my friend who lives with me wonders at him—every one in the wide world wonders that we have neither renewed our engagement nor married.”

“Does no one suspect that he is married?” asked Daisy.

“No,” replied Lady May. “I am sure not; the world wonders when the event will take place, but no one doubts but that, in the end, we are sure to marry—every one expects it.”

"And has he been visiting you all this time?" asked Daisy.

"Yes," was the reluctant reply; "but I could swear to you, Lady Adair, were an oath necessary, that he has never once spoken to me of love or marriage. He has always seemed more or less unhappy, and I have tried to cheer him—that has been the chief part of our intercourse. I have been sorry for him, and touched by his depression. You believe me, Lady Adair?"

"Yes," replied Daisy, "I believe you."

"And now will you refuse to be friends with me?"

"No," said Daisy, shyly. "I will be your friend, Lady Trevlyn."

The two beautiful women embraced each other. Then Lady May said:

"The tie between us shall be the welfare of the man we have both loved. Ah, Daisy! I may be a great heiress, but you have the best of it. He is your husband, dear, not mine."

"Yet you can afford to be generous," said Daisy; "he loves you and not me."

But Lady May shook her head gravely.

"It would be false—it would be mere affectation for me to deny that he loves me, but you are his wife, dear, and men generally love their own wives in the end. Then you have a little child. Think what that means. He may seem indifferent to it now that this trouble of his youth is upon him; soon he will begin to remember that this little child is the heir of his name, the inheritor of his titles and estates. He will soon be keenly, quickly, passionately alive to the child's interest, and, through the child, to yours."

"It may be so," said Daisy, meekly.

"It will be so; and, Daisy—I like your name so much—Daisy, if you would but let me advise you just a little, I could teach you how to win your husband's love forever."

"I ought not to require teaching for that," said Daisy.

"But I understand him," pleaded Lady May. "I have known him so long."

"I will not be outdone in generosity," said Daisy. "Will you teach me, Lady May?"

"Go home," said Lady May, "and be generous with him. Speak to him as one noble soul speaks to another. Tell him that you have heard the whole story, and that while you blame him for the concealment, you pity him for his sufferings; add to that, that you leave him quite free, that you make no attempt to dictate his movements, but that you yourself return to France to-morrow." Daisy looked half suspiciously at her. "Nay, dear," said Lady May, "trust me in all or none. I am advising you to do what, were I in your place, I should do myself. I understand him so well—at-tempt to dictate to him, and he will not like it; submit, and he will do, in the end, what you wish."

"You seem to know him well," said Daisy, half bitterly; but Lady May would not notice the bitterness.

"If you do as I advise you, Daisy," she said, "and return to France, first generously trusting your future in his hands, he will follow you in less than a week; if you reproach him, taunt him, watch him, I do not think that any of us will ever see him again."

"I will do just what you tell me," said Daisy, humbly.

"When you return to the room to him," said Lady May, "go to him; put your arm round his neck; comfort him."

Her voice faltered, and, for the first time, Daisy saw tears in her eyes. Suddenly the young wife remembered that she was not alone in her grief. What must not this lovely Lady May have suffered—she who had loved him so well? She took the white, jeweled hand in her own.

"I am very sorry that it has happened," she said, "sorry for it all."

"He will suffer very much, Daisy; you must be patient with him," she replied. "Do not grow weary when you see him sad and sorrowful."

Daisy looked up at her quickly.

"Are you sending me back to France," she asked, "because you want to see him again? because you want to talk to him?"

"If you think that," said Lady May, quickly, "do not go; I have but one code of honor; it does not include false speaking."

"Forgive me," said Daisy. "I think, after all I have endured, that I should be suspicious even of an angel."

"You shall not be suspicious of me," said Lady May, with a faint, sad smile. "I was just going to tell you that I shall send a message by you to your husband—a message of farewell; and that, after this, I shall never see him again."

Daisy looked up incredulously.

"Never see him again! I thought that you said you would be our friend?"

"Not now; if I had known at first of this marriage, it would have been different; now there is nothing for us but eternal separation."

"But why?" asked Daisy; "I do not understand."

Lady May smiled again.

"I will tell you why, Daisy. We are friends—I may trust you, you will not betray me; I say that I shall part eternally from your husband, and that, after to-day, I shall never see him again. You ask me why, Daisy, and I tell you frankly; I have loved your husband, more or less, all my life—that is, since I was old enough to love. I have given him the whole of my life, and now that I am to be parted from him—if I am to lose him, as I must do for my own sake, I would rather never see him again. I shall send him a little note by you, Daisy; you shall read it; and after that we shall live as strangers."

"The whole of the burden falls on you, then," said Daisy, with bitter tears.

"Not the whole of it, Daisy; your husband will suffer, so will you; but it will pass in time—the little one will help you to love each other, and as time passes you will grow happier. Daisy," she continued, earnestly, "try to rouse your husband—do not let him sink into enervation and despair; rouse him, and bid him work—bid him live for others now. You will be kind and generous, patient and forbearing with him."

"It is a great pity," said Daisy, with simple earnestness, "that

he did not marry you; you would have made him a better wife than I do."

"Nay; you love him, Daisy; and love is a wonderful teacher."

Then Lady May took up a sheet of paper, and wrote on it:

"DEAR SIR CLINTON,—I have had a long conversation with Daisy, your wife, and we have explained to each other many things which puzzled us both. Dear Sir Clinton, this is my farewell to you. For all that is passed I take upon myself the blame. You committed one error—that of concealment; I, many others. We will bury that past, and forget it. If one who has been your true and loyal friend for many years may offer advice, it would be this:

"Redeem the years gone by, atone to your wife for her suffering—love her and love your child; live in the consolation of knowing that you are doing your duty. It will be better that we should not meet again. I ask you as a last favor to me—make your marriage known, you can advertise it in the papers without any date, but do not conceal it any longer; you have no need; your wife is a beautiful, graceful woman of whom you may well be proud. Take care of her. I shall never see you again, but no one will pray more heartily for your welfare than your friend,

"MAY TREVLIN."

She said no word of her sorrow; of the sudden anguish that had smitten her, leaving her life all wrecked; of the sudden blow that had destroyed at once her hope her love, her faith, the long dream of years, the blow that had destroyed her ideal and shown her that the idol she had long worshiped, was, after all, only of clay; not one word—there was a generous forbearance, a noble forgetfulness of self that smote him, when he read it, dumb.

She gave the little note to Lady Adair.

"Read it, Daisy," she said, "and when you join your husband, give it to him."

Daisy read it slowly and carefully, then looked at her rival, whose fast paling face showed that her strength and courage would not hold out much longer.

"You are a noble woman, Lady May," she said; "the world has not spoiled you. No wonder that my husband loves you."

Lady May placed her white hand on the trembling lips.

"Not another word," she said, "about your husband's loving me; he will love you for the future, and no one else. Go to him now, dear; give him that note, with my dear love, and farewell."

She paused one moment, then took Daisy's hand in hers; there was a light, half divine, on her face as she spoke.

"Good-by, Daisy, may God bless you; the greatest happiness that life will hold for me now will be to hear that you are well and happy. Good-by."

CHAPTER LII.

“SHE HAS ALL YOUR LOVE.”

DAISY watched the tall, stately figure disappear, and the tears blinded her eyes as she looked. She half repented what she had done; yet it must have been done sooner or later; there must either have been a crime or a disclosure. Still she felt that it was hard for Lady May. She had done no wrong; the one sin of coquetry was not so great—she who had been flattered and fêted all her life. She had thought no evil, and the love of her life had been lavished on a man who was unworthy of it—quite unworthy. Daisy no longer felt angry with Lady May. She was the injured, not the injurer. She felt only profound pity for her—the beautiful woman whose life was wrecked and ruined. She looked at the paper she held in her hands.

“I know how this story ought to end,” she said. “I ought to die; my little child and I should die; then he could marry Lady May, and they could live happily together ever after; the only thing is, that stories never end as they should do.”

Then, paper in hand she returned to the pretty morning-room, where they had left Sir Clinton to his miserable reflections. She opened the door noiselessly, and looked at him. He sat just where they left him, his face covered with his hands; and again, as Daisy looked at him, she felt like one smitten with death; the strange, gray pallor came over her face, the chill ran through her limbs—that terrible tremble which people say is caused by a person walking over what is to be your grave. Then she went up to him, and laid her hand on his shoulder.

“Caro,” she said, quietly, “will you not speak to me?”

He uncovered his face. Dear Heaven, how haggard and worn it was—how white, with wild, vacant eyes! It was the face of a man who had been almost driven mad with pain. It seemed to change when he saw that it was Daisy. Perhaps he had expected to see Lady May.

“Daisy, is it you?” he said. “My eyes are dim. You are come to upbraid me. Say what you will.”

But Daisy had learned a lesson from the sweetest of women, from the kindest of hearts—there was no upbraiding, no reproach. She knelt down by his side, just as her rival had done long ago, and threw her arms round him. He looked surprised. Sir Clinton knew that women of Daisy’s class, as a rule, are apt to be shrill in their upbraiding and not very choice in their anger. He was startled. Daisy laid her fair head on his shoulder.

“Why should I upbraid you, Caro? I am so sorry for you, dear, that, if giving my life would help you, I would cheerfully lay it down. I have no upbraidings, no reproaches to make to you.”

“I deserve them, Daisy,” said her husband, disarmed by her meekness; “I deserve them all, but I could not tell her, Daisy. I knew that I was a coward, a traitor, unworthy the name of gentle-

man, but I could not do it, Daisy; my miserable tongue used to cleave to the roof of my mouth, my miserable heart failed me time after time. I could not tell her, she was so happy in her innocent joy, so pleased to see me, so delighted—ah, Daisy, I could not tell her; it would have seemed easier for me to have taken a hot iron and seared her beautiful face. I loved her so dearly, Daisy—I loved her so.”

That was hard to bear, but she had promised to be patient, to be courageous. She laid her hand gently on his.

“Poor Caro!” she said, “I am very sorry; it is all very sad.”

Her patience seemed insensibly to cheer and encourage him.

“I never intended to do wrong,” he said; “I had no such thought. I never intended to conceal my marriage; such an idea never occurred to me when I came to England. You believe me, Daisy?”

“Yes, I believe you, Caro; do not distress yourself by telling me anything about it. I am satisfied you meant no wrong.”

But there seemed to him a relief in speaking.

“I ought to have told her the first moment. I should have said, it is all too late, I am married, but I did not; and it has been a source of undying regret to me. After the first day had passed, I could not; I was always deferring the evil hour—putting off the disclosure, until it grew too late, and then, Daisy, I could not do it at all.”

“I understand it, Caro,” she said.

He spoke quite eagerly then.

“Let me do her justice,” he said; “let me do justice to myself. I have not spoken to her of love or of marriage: our conversations, after that first one, have all been on indifferent subjects. That does not excuse me. I did not talk to her of love, but I looked it; I did not talk to her of marriage, but I haunted her footsteps—I was never one minute away from her that I could spend with her by any possibility. There is no excuse for me; I am a coward, a traitor. I deserve the worst that can be said of me. I have no patience with myself; I loathe myself; but it was so hard, Daisy. Do not say that I am an unmanly man; do not say that I deserve contempt. You, whose life has been all peaceful, all serene, you can not tell what the terrible passions of a man’s love is. I declare that I am a strong man; I would face a hundred foes—I am not boasting, Daisy; I would leap into the midst of devouring flames to save a human life. I am strong in body, in heart, and in mind, but that love mastered me. Heaven help a strong man whose soul is the seat of such torments! Calm, sweet Daisy, you know nothing of this terrible fire; it is all strange, all novel to you; I know no fire more terrible; think what it was when it burned my honor and my conscience away. It was more powerful than death; it chained me captive, it bound me fast, hand and foot.”

“Caro,” said honest Daisy, “do you think, dear, it is quite right for you to tell me—your wife—of your love for another woman?”

Sir Clinton looked up in the greatest wonder. It was such a straightforward, sensible, honest question that he was slightly bewildered.

“You know,” continued Daisy, “that I am very sorry indeed

for you—that I feel all your pain and your sorrow as keenly as you feel it yourself; but I am your wife, Caro, and every word I hear of the love that you have given to another woman is a sharp sword in my heart.”

“Pardon me, Daisy; I will say no more.”

“Yes, you must say more. I like you to tell me all your troubles; but I do not like to know that you have no love for me. Caro, I know your story now; it is a very sad one; but there is one thing in it I did not understand. Why, when all your heart belonged to Lady May, why did you marry me?”

“I thought she was married. You remember that once your mother brought me papers from the market town? One of those papers told that Lady May Trevlyn was about to become Duchess of Rosecarn. It was over the Duke of Rosecarn that we quarreled, so that I felt sure it was true. I read the words, and they slew me as I read.”

“Then,” persisted Daisy, “if you knew that—if you knew that you could never be happy again, why did you marry me? That is the only part of your story I do not understand. All would have been well had you not married me. Why did you do it?”

He looked into the sweet, sad face. What there was of manhood and chivalry in him rose up to shield her; he would never own that he had overheard her; he would never confess the truth; she must judge him as she would.

“Was it to revenge yourself on Lady May?” she asked—“to prove your entire indifference to her? Did you sacrifice me so lightly, Caro?”

“No, it was not for that. I did like you, Daisy, very much. I had a kindly, warm, true affection for you, and I thought that I was stronger; I did not know that my love was so entirely master of me. You wonder why I kept my name a secret from you. It was not from any wish to deceive you; it was because you once, when I was ill, asked my name, and I told you Sir Clinton. You did not understand me, and called me Mr. Clifton. Daisy, I liked it well, because it seemed to cut me off from a past that was terrible to me. I said to myself then that I would drop my title—that I would be Mr. Clifton—that I would go away from England, and live a new life in which no one thing should remind me of the past. Then, Daisy, I—I wanted you as the companion of my flight; I asked you to marry me; I thought we should live abroad, and in time grow happy.”

Her sweet, sad face brightened at the words.

“Then you did care for me just a little, Caro?” she said. “You must have done so, or you would not have said that you wanted me to go with you—you must have liked me.”

He would not have saddened her again for the whole wide world.

“Most certainly I liked you, Daisy. Then we went abroad, you and I. You saw how I tried to forget the past, Daisy. I did, indeed—I would read nothing, see nothing, hear nothing that could remind me of home—of England. I would read no papers; I wrote and received no letters. I meant to do my duty before God and man. I was an honest man then. A dreadful fever seized me at last—the restless longing to look on her face—the fever of love and of mad-

ness. I thought, all blind and mad as I was—I thought that if I could look once more on her face, rest, and content, and peace would come to me. I swear to you that I meant no wrong, only rest and peace—I asked no more. One look at her would bring it. So I resolved to look at her, to cool the fever that ran hot in my brain. I did not mean to speak to her, but when the fever had left me, to return and live my life out with you.”

She repressed every feeling of anger and jealousy; her voice was quite calm as she spoke.

“Poor Caro! it was not wise to leave me, but you thought it all for the best.”

“Ah, Daisy, I had been mad before. I went mad again. Far from cooling the fever, that one glance at her added fuel to the flame. You know the rest, and I have no excuse for it. She is the most deeply injured, after all.”

“I do not know,” said Daisy, in that unutterably honest manner of hers. “I think my agony the greatest, Caro. True, I am your wife, but that is a small advantage—she has all your love. If we reckon injuries by the suffering they inflict, then I have been the most injured, Caro, because I loved you and you did not love me. If you had but been frank with me when you asked me to marry you—if you had only told me that your heart was dead, your love was dead, and that in seeking me as your wife you only sought a companion, it would have been better, Caro.”

“Yes, I own it, Daisy,” he replied.

The young wife went on, with a courage that surprised herself:

“You have great faults, Caro. When I married you, I thought you were a great hero—a real hero, such as we read of in books; I could not see any faults in you at all; but now that I come to think over your character, I see glaring defects, and you should try to cure them.”

Sir Clinton was so entirely taken by surprise that he could not speak; he was literally bewildered; this honest, sensible Daisy seemed to have changed places with him—the power and the influence seemed to have left him and gone to her. If his sorrow had been less, he would have smiled; as it was, he looked quietly at her.

She nodded her fair head gravely.

“It is quite true,” she said, “you are deficient in sound, clear judgment; you are too impressionable; you are easily influenced, easily led; and you are not so frank and sincere as you should be.”

Sir Clinton could only open his eyes and wonder what the world was coming to.

CHAPTER LIII.

BETWEEN TWO LOVES.

THEN Daisy, thinking that she had quite sufficiently mingled tenderness and reproof, said to him:

“I have something for you, Caro. Lady May sent it.”

She gave him the paper, and he read it through; his face could grow no whiter—the hand that held the letter shook so that it fell to the ground.

Daisy raised it.

"It is a noble letter," she said—"noble as herself; she gave it to me to read, Caro, before I brought it. She says that you and she will never meet again."

"I suppose not," said Sir Clinton, in a low voice; "it will be better so. I wish she would let me see her, if only once again, to bid her good-by."

"If she is wise, she will not," said honest Daisy; "if you saw her once, you would only want to see her again; there is no use in it."

"You are right, Daisy," he said; "after all, it is no use."

"You know, Caro," she continued, "the time has come now when we must look matters straight in the face. Unfortunately I am living, and unfortunately I am your wife. If I could free you by laying down my life, you know that I would do so; I can not, therefore you will have to bear with me. You must try to like me a little, though I am not to be compared to Lady May; but I love you very dearly, in spite of all that has past and gone; more dearly than you can imagine, quite as well as you love Lady May. I will be very gentle, very submissive, but," she added, with *naïve* fearlessness, "I think that I shall speak my mind a little more plainly than I have done."

"Then you see, Caro," she continued, finding that her words began to impress him, "I am not the only one who depends upon you; have you quite forgotten our baby-boy? I told you he has your eyes, and," added Daisy, with unconscious flattery, "they are very beautiful eyes, too. He has a mouth just like yours, too; I used to kiss it a thousand times, and try to think that it was yours."

She paused suddenly, and her face grew burning red; he could not resist the impulse that led him to lay his hand caressingly on her head. She loved him so well, this fair-haired, sweet-faced wife.

"You ought to love your own boy, Caro; he will be master of Eastwold some day, and who is to teach him to take his place in the world, if you do not? What am I to say to him in the years to come if he asks me, 'Where is my father?' Can I say 'we parted because your father loved some one else, and not me?' You would not so humiliate me before my own child."

"No, I would not," said Sir Clinton.

Then Daisy rose from her seat.

"We have almost taken possession of Lady May's house," she said, still keeping back the passionate emotion that at times almost overpowered her. "Caro," she said, gently, "I have not explained my presence here; will you not own that it is better I came?"

"Far better," he replied, slowly.

"I came because I did not feel satisfied; I felt quite sure that there was a mystery in your life, and that I ought to know it; I knew that you would never tell me; the only thing was to find it out for myself. I left baby with my mother, and came here. Now I will not intrude on you longer; remember what I say to you; if you can endure me—I will say more than that—if you will permit me, I will be your loving, true wife; whenever you want me and baby, you have but to speak the word; you have but to come to

us, or send for us, and we will come that moment. Now I will say good-by."

He looked up quickly; already, in that one short interview, his estimate of Daisy had greatly altered; he had looked upon her as having no particular character or mind. He saw that he was mistaken. She had some very decided characteristics; she was frank, fearless, straightforward, honest; he felt, in some vague way, that she was superior to him.

"Are you going, Daisy?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied. "I have been away long enough."

She did not tell him how long. Daisy was growing worldly wise; for her child's sake no one should know that she had acted as a servant in his father's house. She determined upon keeping that little episode in her life quite secret from every one.

He never thought to ask how long it was since she left France—perhaps he did not think of it.

"I shall go back to Leville," she continued, "and when you want me you will know where to find me. Good-by, Caro!"

She went back to him, always remembering Lady May's advice—she went back, and, bending down, kissed his forehead.

"Good-by, my dear husband," she said; "there will be the warmest welcome for you when you choose to come."

He was too bewildered for speech; when he raised his eyes again she had quitted the room. He called "Daisy," but she did not hear him. She was gone, and between his two loves he was left alone. Nothing could possibly make his position a dignified one—he knew that; therefore he thought the most sensible plan was to retreat. The house was all silent. He had heard the loud clang of the hall door, and he knew that Daisy had gone. He would fain have asked for Lady May, but he dare not. He tried to distinguish the sounds in the house; he could not hear her light footsteps, or the rustle of her silken dress—all was silent and lonely. This was what his sin had brought upon him, this was the wretched result of his folly and his blind, mad passion. Between two loves he had, as it were, lost both. Lady May he would never see again—he knew how firmly she could keep her word—never again! while Daisy, his wife, had suddenly assumed a superiority over him that surprised him more than he had cared to own.

Man is but mortal—the strongest man is barely proof against flattery, and, in spite of his blind infatuation for Lady May, he was just a little flattered to think that Daisy loved him so dearly after all. It is pleasant to be loved. The Daisy whom he had married worshiped him, he knew; he had taken her worship very coolly—coolly as the sun takes the love of the sunflower; but this Daisy, this fair-haired, beautiful woman, who in the same instant had told him of her love for him and of the defects in his character, that was quite another person. She had suddenly developed into a woman for whom he felt profound respect, a woman able to think and criticise.

Besides this, she had a stronger claim on him—she was the mother of his child; the child who would one day be the master of Eastwold, and bear his name, and the honor of his house. He had

never thought much of that child before. Suddenly a sense of what he owed it came over him.

Then Sir Clinton rose from his seat; he had no right to remain longer in Lady May's house—the house his presence had darkened with a shadow that could never pass. He stood for a few minutes at the door, looking round at the beautiful room wherein the happiest hopes of his life had been spent. Never again should he linger here with that beautiful face by his side, never again would he listen to the voice that had made the sweetest music on earth for him.

He passed out of the door, and went home. He was deeply, profoundly wretched; yet, after all, there was something of relief—the worst had happened; the sword so long hanging over his head had fallen at last; the truth that he had not dared to tell had been told for him. There might be wretchedness and despair, but there was no suspense; it was all over—the worst had happened. Lady May knew that he was married, and had bidden him good-by forever. There were no more anxious thoughts, no more gloomy brooding over a secret that he did not care to tell; for the first time for long, dreamy months he felt something like peace; it was all over, nothing more could happen; no more need to dread the postman's knock, or the quick sound of footsteps; no more need to be always thinking what might happen. It had all happened now.

Lady May and himself were far apart as the north and south poles. He wondered why he suffered less this time than before—why he had this vague sense of relief on him—why thoughts of Daisy kept springing up side by side with regret for Lady May.

There was some little consternation at Lifdale House—the house-keeper, Mrs. Jordan, had suddenly left, no one knew why or wherefore, only that she was gone; and the servants, with that love which distinguishes some of them, lost no time in telling Sir Clinton of the fact. At any other time it might have struck him; just now it did not; his mind was full of the startling scene he had just witnessed—the meeting between his two loves. He hardly thought of the event which had created such consternation in his household.

“Gone, is she? Then we must get some one else in her place. It does not matter much, for I do not intend remaining in London much longer.”

That same evening he received a note, written in the third person, telling him that Mrs. Jordan had suddenly been sent for to join her son in America. It so happened that Daisy's secret never was known, and that was perhaps the only secret that she ever kept in her life.

“Going again!” said the servants. “When would Sir Clinton marry and settle, like other men? It was dreary work, always going and coming, and never seeming to know his own mind. They had hoped for something better this time.”

At Cliffe House there had been no comment on what had passed; no one asked who admitted Lady Adair; the servants there only knew that she had gone away first, and that some time afterward Sir Clinton Adair had quitted the house. But of the strange scene which had taken place—of the fact that the two whom the world

had so surely looked upon as lovers, had parted for all time—no one had the least idea.

Lady May gave orders that she should be denied to visitors for the rest of the day—that she was tired and would not see any one. It was not considered strange, because my Lady May often preferred spending half a day alone. No one was surprised, either, when she refused to take dinner, and asked for some tea to be sent to her room. She was greatly beloved by her servants, and, at the idea that her ladyship was suffering from headache, they kept great silence, hushed voices, hushed footsteps, until Miss Lockwood returned in the evening. She looked surprised at the darkened, silent house.

“Where is Lady Trevlyn?” she asked, and was told that her ladyship was in her room, tired, and not disposed for visitors. Still more surprised, she continued: “Sir Clinton Adair was to spend the day here—has he been?”

“Yes, he had been, and gone earlier in the day.” Then Miss Lockwood felt sure that something had happened.

“There has been a lovers’ quarrel,” she thought; “when will this state of things end?—when will they marry as sensible people should do, and put a stop to this disagreeable state of things? I must go and see her. I shall advise her to marry at once,” and, full of this idea, Miss Lockwood went to Lady May’s room.

CHAPTER LIV.

“MY HEART IS BROKEN.”

It was twilight when Miss Lockwood rapped at Lady May’s door. At first there was no response; then Miss Lockwood said:

“May, will you see me for a few minutes?”

“Yes; come in, dear. I did not know it was you,” said a voice, sweet and gentle as ever, but with all the ring and the music gone from it. The elder lady went in. The room was almost dark, and a sense of some misfortune, of something chilling in the atmosphere, struck Miss Lockwood forcibly.

“You are all in darkness, my dear,” she said; “why not have the lamps lighted?”

“I do not require them,” was the languid reply.

Miss Lockwood turned round briskly.

“Now that convinces me,” she said, “that, from some cause or other, you are dull. I dread hearing any one say that they prefer darkness to light; it betrays, to my thinking, a morbid state of mind.”

Never a word replied Lady May.

“I am sorry that I went out,” she continued, briskly. “I should not have gone if I had thought that you would be alone. I understood that Sir Clinton was to spend some part of the day with you.”

The name fell in that silent room with a strange, ominous ring. Lady May uttered no word.

“Has he not been here?” she asked again.

“Yes,” was the brief reply.

"He did not remain, then?" said Miss Lockwood.

"He stayed some time," replied Lady May; and again the silence was so deep that the ticking of the jeweled watch on the table was distinctly heard.

"May," said Miss Lockwood, after a pause, "have you quarreled with Sir Clinton?"

"No; I have not. I never quarrel with any one; why should I quarrel with him?"

"There is something wrong," thought Miss Lockwood, "and that something is worse than we have had yet."

She could not bear the thought of her young friend and beloved charge sitting there in the dark without a word. She took one of the little wax matches from the box, and, striking it quickly, she lighted the lamps before Lady May had time to hide her face or turn away. Full in the lamp-light its ghastly pallor was plainly to be seen.

Miss Lockwood started back, with a cry.

"Great Heaven!" she exclaimed. "I thought — oh, how you frightened me, May! I thought you were a ghost. So you are, the ghost of yourself. What has happened to you?"

"To me, nothing," she replied, slowly.

"Then what has happened to any one else? May, May, surely you have not angered Sir Clinton again?"

"No; I have not," replied the poor girl. "I have not angered him, or quarreled with—but—"

"But what? My darling, do not torture me by suspense. Do you know what I came upstairs for?"

"No," replied Lady May, in the same dull tone; "I do not."

"I came to urge you to put an end to all this, and settle your wedding-day. Every one is asking me when it is to be; every one expresses surprise that you have waited so long, and wonders what you have waited for. Of course it concerns no one but yourself; still, you can not prevent people from making remarks."

Then the words died suddenly on her lips, as she saw the white face and dim, sorrowful eyes.

"May, my darling, tell me what it is. I have been your friend, your confidant for many long years—do not refuse to trust me now. My heart breaks when I look at you. I know it is something about Sir Clinton Adair—nothing else in the wide world has the power to affect you so."

Then Lady May walked across the room to her friend. She bent her golden head until it drooped on that faithful breast; she clasped her white arms round the tall figure; a cry of exceeding bitterness came from her lips.

"Bear with me," she said; "my heart is broken. Bear with me, I have lost my love forever and ever. We shall never meet in this world again."

"Then you have quarreled!" said Miss Lockwood, in great consternation.

"No, it is worse than that—it is the worst which could have happened. Can you not guess?"

"Does he care about some one else, May?" she asked, in wonder.

"No, it is worse even than that—and it is all my fault. Three people are made miserable for life; and it is all my fault."

"My dear," said Miss Lockwood, calmly, "I never was clever at guessing. I pray you to tell me what has happened. How you tremble, May, and your heart beats so fast—your hands are cold as death! What has he done to you, my child, my treasure?"

"Do you remember," said the girl, faintly, "when we read in the papers that he had returned home? I told you that I would lose no time in begging his forgiveness. You came to London with me, and I went to see him."

"I remember all about it. What then?" asked Miss Lockwood, impatiently.

"Even then, even then—Heaven help me!—he was married."

"Married!" cried Miss Lockwood, "and never told you! Married! and let you make friends with him—kept such a secret as that from you! I can not believe it, May."

"It is true; he was married then. He read in some false paper or other that I was about to marry the Duke of Rosecarn, and, quite reckless of everything, he married the—the girl who had been kind to him during his long illness."

"I can not believe it, May. No man could be so base, so wicked—"

"You must not call him wicked; he is not that. It was all my fault, you see."

"Surely," cried Miss Lockwood, "you do not excuse him, do you, May?"

"I can make allowances for him. I know how madly he loved me, and I know that my wicked coquetry drove him mad. He did not return to England, as we thought, to see me. I do not think he meant to see me again. I sought him, you know," she added, with quivering lips. "We must never forget that I sought him then. He was pleased to see me, and the old love must have awoken again more strongly than ever in his heart. I gave him no time to tell me that night, and afterward, I think, he was ashamed or afraid."

"May," cried Miss Lockwood, indignantly, "do not excuse him; there is no excuse for him; there can be no pardon for him. I say such deception was a crime—not a fault, an error, or a sin—but a crime! Great Heavens! that you, a lady by instinct and refinement, a woman in tenderness and truth, that you should seek to excuse him—it is monstrous! I wish that he were here; he should have plain speaking that would startle him. You may call Sir Clinton what you like; I say he is a villain to have done this!"

She stopped abruptly, for the girl, all pale and trembling, had started back, with a bitter cry.

"If you ever say that again, if you ever say one word against him, you and I will part forever! He may have done wrong; but he was my first love, and he will be my last; I shall know no other, and I will not hear one word against him—no, not one! Every word against him is a sword in my heart—do you know that?"

"But, May, be reasonable. Such a cruel deception never was practiced on any creature; and on you, above all others, May—you, so generous and loving. Do you know that I really can not believe

it? If the man was married, why did he not tell me, even if he did not like to tell you? There can be no excuse in the world for him. May, if it were another person, how much more keen your sense of right and wrong would be? What can you say in his favor?"

"Nothing," replied Lady May: "but if I can make neither excuse nor apology for him, at least I can say that my love shall shield him from blame and reproach—shall be true to him in adversity as in prosperity."

"May!" cried Miss Lockwood, in a voice of horror; "you can not talk about loving a married man."

"No, I can not; you are quite right. After this day his name shall never pass my lips at all. I will not speak to him—I can not speak to him. We have parted, this day, forever!"

"Quite right, too," said Miss Lockwood, indignantly. "He ought never to have returned. He ought either to have brought his wife with him, or to have told us about her at once. His wife! Heaven help us! I wonder that you have patience. I hope, I do hope, May, that you have given him a piece of your mind."

"I gave him my heart long ago; I suppose that my mind went with it. If you mean, did I scold or upbraid him—ah, no, dear; never a word!"

"Then I wish to Heaven that I had been here, that is all; he would have had plain truth in plain language. I have no patience with sophistry, May. I call a spade a spade, a crime a crime. I would not wrap up deceit like this and give it a fair name. It is a crime, May, to have deceived you—a cruel, wanton, wicked crime. And you have parted with him forever? You have done well, May. It was a fatal day on which you first saw him. I grieve that you loved him all the best years of your life: all the love of your heart has been given to him, and I repeat that it is terribly cruel. May, how did you learn this? Did he tell you himself?"

"I would rather not answer the question," replied Lady May. "You are hard enough upon him now; if you knew the circumstances of the case, you would be even harder."

But afterward, when Miss Lockwood came to make inquiries about the events of the day, she gave a very shrewd guess as to what had happened.

"You shall tell me what you like, my darling, and keep what you like from me. If I could but help you—"

"You must help me!" she cried wildly. "This is the second ordeal I have passed through; I have not strength for it. I had learned to love him with all my heart; I—what shall I do? Oh, Heaven! what shall I do?"

Her courage and strength gave way; she fell on her knees, weeping wildly.

"Heaven help me! Heaven help me! What shall I do? He is gone; every one will know soon that he is married. What shall I do?"

"My darling, try to calm yourself," said Miss Lockwood; "you will be ill—try to be calm."

But there was to be no calm or peace just then for Lady May; she had suffered so cruelly, and the reaction after her long self con-

trol was so great and so violent. She flung her white arms above her head; she fell, with her face on the floor, crying:

"What shall I do? Heaven help me! what shall I do? My heart is broken. Oh, love, love, if I could die!"

So, through the long hours of the night, Miss Lockwood held her in her arms, trying to calm the wild, hysterical cries—they never varied.

"What shall I do? Heaven help me! what shall I do?"

Not until the morning dawn did those piteous cries cease; then the tired eyes closed, the tired voice was silent; she could weep and cry no more.

"Keep my secret," she whispered to Miss Lockwood; "keep my secret; no one must know that he had hidden his marriage from me. Help me to paint my face, to dress my hair; help me to laugh and to talk, to dance, to sing, for two days—only two days—and, after that, there will be time to die."

"You shall not die," said Miss Lockwood, kissing her face, with fast-falling tears. "You shall not die for his sake, my darling. He never was good enough for you; you shall live to bless some one else."

CHAPTER LV.

"YOU LADY ADAIR!"

A MONTH had passed since Daisy returned to France. All was well there; the little one had not lost through her absence. Mrs. Erne had "gone through" a great deal with Bedina, who had proved more than ordinarily stupid; but she had contented herself by thanking Heaven that in good time she should be among "sensible Christians" again. She was glad to see Daisy, but the Daisy who left Leville was not the same person as the one who returned; this Daisy was a quiet, self-reliant, firm, though gentle woman. It seemed to her mother, even, that she looked years older; the fair face had quite a new expression; the sweet, sad eyes seemed to look out with a half-frightened glance at the world that she had found so much harder, and so much more wicked than she had thought. Daisy had passed through the ordeal of suffering—from it she had learned experience that years can never give.

A curious kind of resignation came over her. She knew the worst—there was no more to dread or to fear—her husband did not love her, and did love some one else. She had little hope, but, at least, she was saved the torture of suspense—the dread of unknown evil; all the truth, such as it was, lay bare before her.

"I should think," she said to herself, "that in all the world there are no three people so miserable as we are."

The only way out of the difficulty that she could see was to die; but then Providence did not always lend itself to the arrangements and wishes of men. Another doubt came to her—in Lady May she recognized a high-souled, noble woman—it was doubtful whether she would ever think of Sir Clinton with respect, much less love him.

Not that Daisy had any intention of dying, but she dwelt so con-

stantly on the fact that her death was the only means of freeing her husband, that she came to look on it as a matter of course. A month had passed, and she had never heard of or from him. No suspicion came to her now, as it would have done before. She never once, even ever so faintly, fancied that he was hovering near Lady May. She had returned home an altered woman, resigned to her fate, whatever it might be, patient to endure to the end, but firmly resolved that there should be no more concealment—she would have justice done to herself and her child.

“Mother,” she said, the day after her return, “we have been deceived in my husband’s circumstances.”

Mrs. Erne grew pale with apprehension. Was she to lose the income that her daughter’s husband had settled on her?

“Deceived, Daisy! Dear me, I am sorry to hear that. I had no idea—is he—has he lost all his money, then?”

Daisy looked up in wonder.

“Oh, no, nothing of that kind. You do not understand, mother, of course. His name is not Mr. Clifton.”

“Daisy, my dear, what do you mean?”

“His name is not Mr. Clifton. He is a baronet—a very rich and noble man.”

Mrs. Erne’s face was a picture of surprise.

“A baronet, my dear! What is that?”

“It means that he has a title, mother. His real name is Sir Clinton Adair. I am not Daisy Clifton. I am Lady Adair.”

The poor homely mother grew paler still with fright.

“Oh, Daisy, my dear, how can it be? Are you quite sure that your marriage is all right—was it legal?”

Daisy laughed a low, bitter laugh, not good to hear.

“Perfectly legal before men,” she replied, thinking that perhaps the absence of love made it illegal before God.

“You are quite sure of it, Daisy? Do not laugh at me, my dear. See, I am trembling now. It is such a terrible thing, Daisy. Daisy, my dear, if he is a great nobleman, why did he marry you?”

Again that laugh that was so unpleasant to hear.

“What do great noblemen marry for, mother—is it not either money or love?”

“Yes, I should suppose so, Daisy.”

“Well we may be quite sure that Sir Clinton did not marry me for money—I had none. The only conclusion we can arrive at is that he married me for—”

“For love,” interrupted her mother; “and he must have loved you very dearly, Daisy. I never thought to live to see this day. You Lady Adair!”

“Yes,” replied Daisy—she seemed to take keen delight in talking about this title of hers—“the baby there, mother, such a little mite he looks, he will one day be Sir Clifton Adair; for, do you know what I have decided upon doing? I shall call my baby Clifton, in memory of those early days, when I believed it was his father’s name.”

“Daisy,” said Mrs. Erne, slowly, “how very much your husband must have loved you. I suppose he could have chosen from among the richest ladies in England.”

"Certainly he could," replied Daisy, slowly.

"Yet he chose you. I should not have imagined that he loved you so well; no one would have thought it from his manner."

"They would not indeed, mother," was the calm reply.

Not to that anxious motherly woman would Daisy confide the secret of her anxiety and distress.

So time passed on, and no news came from Sir Clinton. The only message that reached her from England was that she received the newspapers containing the announcement of her own marriage. There was no date given, no place mentioned—merely the briefest possible paragraph to say that Sir Clinton Adair had recently married Miss Erne; and every person who read that paragraph fancied that the whole details were given in some other paper. She hardly knew whether to be most pleased with the fact that her marriage was announced, or vexed at the method of the announcement; it showed one thing, though, very plainly, that, although he had not cared to make the fact of his marriage public, still it had been legal, and all in proper form. Then another English paper told her that Sir Clinton and Lady Adair were on the Continent, and intended to spend some time there. Again she wondered, but came to the conclusion that it was Sir Clinton himself who had caused these lines to be inserted. True, Sir Clinton and Lady Adair were abroad, but where was he? The weeks passed on—it was six since her return. At last she received a letter from Boulogne from her husband. Daisy's hand trembled as she opened it, wondering what it contained. Only a few lines, and those were written in the most feeble and trembling of hands. They merely said:

"DEAR DAISY,—I am at Boulogne, at the Hôtel du Nord. I am very ill. One doctor says that I shall recover, the other that I shall not. If I die there is much to be arranged over the boy. I must make a will, appointing trustees for him. It would be better, I think, for you to come and see me here, if you do not mind the long journey. Your mother will take care of the child. From your affectionate husband,
CLINTON ADAIR."

Her first thought was one of bitterness—her mother take care of the child! Most fathers, if they found themselves in danger of death, would long to see their only son—would wish to kiss the little face; but not he—not Sir Clinton Adair.

Her second thought was one of deep sorrow and pain; he was in danger of death, and she forgot his fault for the time—forgot that he had never loved her, that she had been most unhappy with him—forgot all and everything, except that he was her husband, and in danger of death.

Without loss of time she made all arrangements with her mother.

"It seems to me, Daisy," said that good woman, plaintively, "that you are always going away from home. I am sure that Bedina will be mistress of the house; she was before. If your husband is ill, how could he write?"

But Daisy listened to no remonstrance, and she did not rest again until she was on her way to Boulogne. The Hôtel du Nord was soon reached, and there Daisy found Sir Clinton sick, almost unto

death. She inquired hastily what was the matter with him, and they told her that he had gone out one evening and was caught in a violent storm of rain. They had begged of him to be careful, as so many people were ill, but he laughed at all advice, perhaps being quite indifferent as to whether we were ill or well. The result was what might have been expected, a severe and terrible low fever. Daisy was taken at once to his room, as he had expressed a wish to that effect, and she was startled at the havoc that grief and illness had made in Sir Clinton. He was weak as a child; his hands were shadowy, his face pale and thin, almost transparent. He looked at her when she entered with quivering lips.

"It was very good of you to come, Daisy," he faltered. "You heap coals of fire on my head."

"You never thought that I should refuse, Caro; you knew me better than that. I should have come to you from the other end of the world. You have been very ill. Are you better?"

"Yes," he replied, gravely. "I shall not die this time, Daisy; I am much better. When I heard the doctors disagree I thought that my life was safe. I think so now; but I have been very ill; and, lest my illness should take a serious turn, I thought it better to send for you."

Daisy had taken off her bonnet and cloak. She went up to Sir Clinton and knelt down by his bedside.

"This is like old times," she said. "You lying ill while I nurse you."

"Daisy," said Sir Clinton, "there is nothing like illness for bringing a man to his senses. Since I have been lying here I have been thinking—thinking deeply—and I can see my fault in its true colors, in its full enormity. I have been very wrong; I have wronged Lady May; but, above all, I have wronged you. I can make no amends to her; there is nothing that can atone to her for the years she has wasted over me; but for my greatest wrong I can atone; for my studied neglect of you, my indifference, my want of love, my coldness, I will do my best to atone. You have been a true, faithful, tender little wife to me, Daisy, and I will, if God spares my life, make all up to you, and will begin again quite afresh."

Daisy bent her sweet, flower-like face, all flushed with happiness, on the thin, white hands of her husband.

"You fill my heart with gladness, Caro," she said.

"Can you love me, Daisy, as though I had been the best of husbands?" he said. "Ah, my dear wife, illness shows us everything in true colors. Now that I look back upon my life with eyes that have been dimmed with the shadows of death, I see so much to blame—I see my sin in all its enormity, and I only wonder that I was mad enough or blind enough not to see better what I was doing. Daisy, I feel like a man who had been mad with delirium or fever; I can not have been in my sane, sober senses. Do you know, little wife, that if I had heard the same thing of any one else—that any one else had behaved as I have done, I should have called such conduct by a very bad name. Illness seems to have cleared my brain as it has cleared my senses. I can not imagine what infatuation was over me, or why I ever concealed my marriage from Lady May."

"It was the first step in the wrong direction," said Daisy, "and it was difficult to retrace. I can imagine the temptation when she, whom you loved so dearly, found you out, and asked you to be friends. It is some comfort to think that what you did was in the beginning not quite your own fault. But, Caro, do you think that you will ever learn to love me?"

He raised himself and looked down on the sweet face.

"Daisy," he said, "I am going to be a good man, Heaven helping me—a good man. I will make you happy; I will devote my life to you and to my child; I will only remember the past to atone for it. Will you help me, dear wife, by being kind and patient with me?"

A sunbeam, passing through the window, lingered on the flower-like face she raised to his, as Daisy, with her whole heart on her lips, answered:

"Yes."

CHAPTER LVI.

"HE WILL ALWAYS LOVE HER."

THE resolve taken in illness had its effect. Sir Clinton rose from his sick-bed a wiser man; the past seemed to him like a fevered dream—he could hardly realize it. How near he had been to the very brink of crime! Now that he was calm, collected, and himself again, he was filled with wonder that he could have ever so far forgotten the most common rules of right and wrong—he would live to make amends. When he had quite recovered he wrote to Lady May a long letter—one which he honestly believed would be his last to her. He implored of her to pardon him; he told her that his love for her had been so great that it had literally driven him mad, and that to his madness must be attributed the wrong which he had done.

"I was never for one moment myself," he said, "from the night when I believed that I had lost you until I lay sick unto death; then, and then only, my senses came back to me, and I saw what I had done; then, and then only, I knew that I had been on the verge of the deadliest crime. May, I have wronged you more deeply than woman was ever injured before; I will do my best to atone for it. But, May—May, this is the last cry of a broken heart to you. I can face my life better if you will send me one word to say that you have forgiven me, and that you are happy. If I had that assurance, I should be a different man—I could resume my life with a new heart. Will you send me that one word, May?"

He gave the letter to Daisy to read, but she refused.

"I trust you," she said, "and I trust Lady May. I have no wish to read it."

The answer came in due time—brief, but full of meaning; it consisted of these lines:

"I forgive you from the depth of my heart; the fault was in me, and I am quite happy."

Not another word, and with this Sir Clinton was compelled to be content; but to him there was more of pathos in those few words,

"I am quite happy," than in a whole volume of reproach. She had forgiven him; that ought to be enough. Now he must bid good by to the bright, beautiful dream that had made the brightness of his life; he must live for his wife and child.

He was firm and resolute, but the doom of the wretched was on him; he might as well have tried to tear the living, beating heart from his body, and live without it, as tear from his mind all thought of her. He was firm and steadfast; he would not spend one minute in conscious dreams of her; he tried to put all memory of her out of his life, but he never quite succeeded, because she had been life itself to him.

Then, when he was strong enough to travel, he asked Daisy if they should go back to Leville; but Daisy had grown wise; she dearly loved her pretty home among the vines and olives, yet she would not return there, knowing that to him it must be haunted by memories of the past. It was there that he had dreamed of, thought of, and suffered for Lady May.

"Caro, we will not go back to Leville," she said, "it is a very pretty home, but very dull. Why should we not travel? That would be the best thing for you, it would cheer you, and it would educate me. I have always had a great longing to see Spain—will you take me there?"

So it was settled; Daisy was not willing for Sir Clinton to return to Leville—she went herself. Mrs. Erne, only too thankful to return to England, went home a richer and wiser woman; until the day she died she never ceased telling the history of foreign lands; she became the heroine of the whole country-side—an authority whom all the poorer neighbors consulted, and not a little proud was the kindly woman of her superior knowledge.

The house at Leville was left empty; baby with his nurse was to travel with them. Sir Clinton had smilingly acceded to Daisy's wish that the boy should be called Clifton. He was beginning to love the fair-haired, laughing boy who smiled in his face and stretched out his arms to him.

The sun was shining just then for Daisy; her husband was kind and attentive to her; what was better still, he loved the child. She believed that he had ceased to think or dream of Lady May. They went to Spain; Daisy's dream of delight was verified. They lingered in fair Castile and sunny Granada, where it seemed to her that a new and more beautiful life began for them. They remained there for more than a year; Daisy decided not to return to England. At present all was well; what might happen if they were once more on the spot, and Sir Clinton met again with his lost love? Like a wise woman, Daisy knew that prevention was better than cure—that it was wiser to keep out of temptation than to struggle against it.

The present was her own; no one could tell what the future might be. She tried her best to be a companion to her husband. She read deeply; she thought continually; she listened to the conversation of wise people. She lost no opportunity of improving herself; and the result was, that in the graceful, beautiful Lady Adair no one would have recognized simple Daisy Erne.

She was greatly admired. The dark-eyed Spaniards especially admired the fair, lily-like beauty of Sir Clinton's wife. Whatever

city they visited they were eagerly welcomed in the first circles. If Sir Clinton had been inclined to jealousy, he would have been most jealous, for never had fair lady more courtiers. It was all one to Daisy; there was but one face in the whole world for her, and that was the face of her husband.

When they had spent a year in Spain, Sir Clinton asked her if she would return home. She declined. Not yet—she was not ready just yet, she told him; and he looked at her half wonderingly.

“Do you not trust me yet, Daisy?” he asked; and she answered:

“Yes, I trust you, but the truest wisdom is to shun temptation, not to seek it,” and in his heart he knew that she was right.

“Where shall we go now, Daisy?” he asked, gently.

“I should like to go to Italy, Caro,” she replied, and to Italy they went.

The little Clifton had grown into a beautiful boy by this time—he could walk and talk. He was a charming child, fair of face, with a bold, bright manner that was irresistibly charming. Sir Clinton loved him very dearly; he forgot his troubles and trials when he was with the boy; they were quite companions. Daisy’s heart grew light when she saw how dearly the father loved the son for whom he had once cared so little. Sir Clinton was more like himself when the boy was with him than at any other time. He talked to him quite gravely about the time when he should be master of Eastwold, and the little one seemed to understand. To Daisy’s great delight, as the time passed on, Sir Clinton never seemed happy when away from the boy. She smiled to herself, thinking, half sadly, how little she once dreamed of being jealous of her son.

Was she perfectly happy? who shall say? Her child was lovable and lovely; her husband was all kindness and attention; she was Lady Adair of Eastwold, she had all that woman’s heart could wish or desire—was she happy? Perhaps this was the answer, that one day when she stood watching the sun set, the whole face of the bright heavens covered with crimson and gold, she clasped her hands, raising them after the manner of one who prays:

“I would rather, far rather, be there than here,” said Lady Adair.

Her husband never mentioned Lady May’s name; he was kindness itself to her, but often in the early morning dawn, when she heard him murmur in his sleep, the name upon his lips was May.

“He will always love her,” thought Daisy; “he can not help it—it was his fate. Oh, miserable me, to stand between them!”

Lady Adair looked very beautiful, but she was not very strong; people told her she must take care of herself; then they wondered at the strange dreary smile with which she listened. Her husband was very careful of her; he made her wrap up well; he would not let her breathe the night air. Once, when he was begging of her to be careful, she placed her hands one on each side of his face.

“Poor Caro!” she said, in a gentle voice, and he wondered why she should pity him.

Still he did not feel the least anxiety over her—what need? She talked, laughed—she was always bright and cheerful; people spoke of her as one of the most piquant characters they ever met. She was wonderfully honest and straightforward; she was quick at repartee; every day her husband saw in her something more worthy

of admiration. He had perhaps known no greater surprise than when this simple Daisy of his turned out to be what she really was—a bright, clever woman.

“I shall not leave Italy until I have seen Rome, Caro,” said Daisy. “When we do get to England, we shall not be in a hurry to leave it again. Perhaps we may not travel again. Let us see Rome, Caro, while we are here.”

One or two English friends to whom they confided their intentions of going on to Rome warned them. It was not a good time for visiting the Imperial City. Strangers going just at that time were liable to take the fever—better wait; but Daisy only laughed.

“I shall not take the malady, Caro,” she said; “let us go—we want to go to England in the spring.”

They went, and Lady Adair enjoyed the visit very much. She seemed to grow better and stronger; perhaps the fact that she was better made her imprudent. While lingering on the Campagna, she caught some breath of fatal air, and how it was no one quite knew, but she caught the fever about which she had been so often warned.

At first the attack was slight, and no one felt either anxiety or fear. Sir Clinton took her flowers and fruit, he talked to her when she wanted to talk, and he read to her in a low voice when she wished it.

“She should be quite well,” she said, “in a few days, and then they would begin to think about returning home.” But the days grew longer and she grew worse.

It was the sudden attack of delirium that first frightened Sir Clinton. Once, when he went into her room, she fancied herself back at Leville, and was crying loudly to Bedina that the house was burning. He calmed her, and was shocked to see how much worse she was.

“I have been dreaming,” she said to him, with a faint smile. “I thought Bedina was here.”

He talked to her for a few minutes, then was startled again at finding that she had wandered into the shadowland of delirium.

From that time she grew steadily worse—it became certain that she would not recover. Sir Clinton was like one distracted; he went about in search of the most clever physicians—he would have moved heaven and earth to save her, but she was not to be saved. The fiat had gone forth—Daisy was to die. Sir Clinton would not believe it at first. He said the doctors must be mistaken, their verdicts were all nonsense; she must recover. No one could call him cold and careless now; his indifference had all vanished; his wife was in danger; for the time being he forgot that there was any other woman in the world.

The day came when Daisy, faint and feeble, whispered to him:

“Caro, I am going to die. I thought I should; it was the only way for the story to end.”

“For Heaven’s sake, Daisy, do not say such terrible words,” he replied.

But she, bending over him, said:

“Caro, will you send for Lady May?—I want to see her before I die.”

CHAPTER LVII.

DAISY'S REQUEST.

"DAISY is dying, and wishes to see you," wrote Sir Clinton to Lady May; "I know that you will lose no time in coming."

The letter was sent at once, but it was forwarded from Cliffe House to Trevlyn Nest, and from there to Cowes, so that some time elapsed before Lady May received it.

She did not lose one hour; she merely waited to read the letter to Miss Lockwood.

"You must come with me," she said; and the kind-hearted companion did not in the least object.

"Daisy dying!" All through that long journey, with the clang of wheels, and the throbbing of the engines, the beating of the waves, and the rush of steam, Lady May heard those words:

"Daisy is dying!"

Other words haunted her—those she had uttered herself:

"You have held a daisy in your hand, and have flung it carelessly away."

Was it so? Would she find Daisy dying of her husband's carelessness and neglect? Ah, please Heaven, no!

They never rested one hour by day or by night until they reached Rome. Sir Clinton, with his family and suite were staying at a large house in Via Condotti; there they hastened.

Lady May's first breathless inquiry of the man who opened the door to them, was of Lady Adair. Alas! there was no good news. Daisy was dying—pretty, simple, loving Daisy; that strange mixture of childhood and womanhood—honest, clear-sighted, yet so simple—Daisy, who had loved her husband so dearly. As she sat there, waiting, Lady May's eyes filled with tears.

Sir Clinton came to them in the pretty saloon—so altered, so careworn, that it was with the greatest difficulty they recognized him. He held out his hand in greeting to Lady May.

"I am glad you have come," he said. "Daisy is very restless, and asks continually for you."

"For me?" said Lady May, with quivering lips. "Oh, Clinton, is it possible that she is dying?—that Daisy is dying?"

"It is most unhappily true," he replied. "I believe nothing but her intense desire to see you has kept her alive so long."

"What is it?" she continued. "What has killed her?"

He seemed to read her half-expressed doubt and fear in her face.

"May," he said, gravely, "many sins lie at my door, but not the faintest shadow of unkindness to my wife, Daisy. Since I—well, in plain words—came to my senses, I have been the kindest, the most attentive of husbands to her. She will tell you so herself."

Lady May cried, impulsively:

"I thank Heaven!"

"Did you think that I had been unkind to her?" asked Sir Clinton, reproachfully.

"No, not unkind," she replied; "but I did fear that you had, perhaps, neglected her; and she is sensitive—poor, pretty Daisy!"

"No, I have not neglected her. I have kept my promise to the letter, May. I have learned to love my wife, and I am sincere in saying that I would give my life now, this moment, to save hers."

"I believe you," said Lady May. "Now, shall we go to her?"

"Take off your bonnet and cloak," said Miss Lockwood. "You look so ill, May."

But Lady May had no patience to wait while wine was sent for. She only cared to be with Daisy—Daisy, who, in dying, had sent for her.

She went with Sir Clinton to the room where Lady Adair was lying. While she lived, that scene never passed from her mind. She entered a beautiful room, with a large window looking to the west; the sun was setting, and its last beams lingered on the vine-wreathed window. There were pictures and statues, books and flowers, grand old furniture, a massive bed with carved posts and velvet hangings. On the white pillow she saw the white face of Daisy Adair.

Dying! Ah, would to Heaven it had been otherwise! The shadow, but not the horror, of death was there. The blue eyes, so large and bright, were looking eagerly for her; the sweet lips, still crimson as coral, were slightly parted; the fair hair hung over her neck and shoulders—sweet, simple Daisy, with her woman's soul looking out of her eyes. She held out both her thin, white hands in silent greeting to Lady May. There was a minute of silence, that seemed like a great heart beat; then Lady May knelt down by Daisy's side, and hiding her face on the white hands, wept passionate tears.

"Are you weeping for me?" asked Daisy, faintly. "Do not; believe me, I am happy; I would rather die than live. Caro, come here."

He knelt down by Lady May's side, and, taking a hand of each in her faint, feeble grasp, Daisy kissed them.

"I know you both love me now."

"That we do," said Lady May, sobbing as though her heart would break.

Daisy was looking, not at her, but at the red, round sun and the crimson clouds. Perhaps to her mind came lines that she had loved well:

"The voice that now is speaking shall be beyond the sun."

The sweet, red light lingered on her pale face and touched her fair hair with gold. Slowly she seemed to bring back her eyes and her thoughts from the setting sun to the two kneeling by her side.

"Do not think I am sorry to die," she said, in her faint, low voice. "I have never talked much about religion; it was too deep down in my heart for me to talk of; but I have loved God," she said, with her old, child-like simplicity. "I love Him now; I long to be with Him, to be at rest. There are no mistakes in Heaven, Caro, and our marriage was a great mistake."

"My darling Daisy, you have been the sweetest wife to me."

"I have loved you very much," she said; "but it was a terrible

mistake. This is your first love—your only love, Caro—and I give you back to her, dear. You have been kind to me, you have refused me no wish, you have studied how best to make me happy; but—ah, well, I would rather be with God in heaven, Caro, than here.”

He bent down and kissed the white brow.

“I know that you would like me to live,” she said, “and so would Lady May; but I would not wish to get well. It was the only way, after all, in which the story could end. I do not say it in bitterness, Caro.”

“Oh, Daisy,” cried Lady May; “I would change places with you. Do you think that I shall ever be happy after this?”

“Yes,” she replied, with a beautiful smile; “I think you will. I shall die, and you will be very sorry for me; you will both mourn for me; and then, when you have forgotten the sorrow, you will be happy. I did not mean it: but, you see, I came between you; I have been the barrier between you; I have been like a dark shadow over your lives. Now it is all over, and I am going home to God. Oh, Caro, Caro, I am so glad to go!”

She clasped both hands more tightly in her own.

“Caro,” she said, “I give you back the fair young love of your youth. Lady May, promise me that you will be kind to him, and marry him in time—when he asks you?”

“You are breaking my heart, Daisy,” said Lady May. “I can not promise—”

“But you must; I can not die until you do. Poor Caro! he has had no real happiness yet; let him have some. I shall not die in peace until you promise me. And when I am dead, and you look up at such a sky as this, all covered with crimson clouds, think that I am looking at you from behind them. Oh, Caro, make her promise!”

“Oh, Daisy, was this what you wanted her for?”

“Yes; I shall die so happy if I know that she is going to be your wife. Promise me,” she continued, kissing the trembling hand clasped in her own. “You would not see me die unhappily, would you, Lady May? Whisper to me only one word, ‘yes;’ it will give me peace.”

She must have whispered it, for a sudden light came over Daisy’s face—a sweet smile played round her lips.

“Then it will all come right,” she said; “and, Lady May, there is a kind of justice in it, after all. You will have Caro, but my son will be his heir. My son will be always near him and with him, to remind him of me; my son will live in the beautiful home that I have never seen. There is justice in it, after all.”

“Yes,” said Sir Clinton, sadly.

Daisy looked up at him suddenly.

“Caro,” she said, “will you let Clifton come in? I want to see if he will like Lady May?”

“It will agitate you, Daisy,” he said.

“No; let him come. Go yourself for him, Caro.”

Sir Clinton quitted the room, and Daisy drew Lady May’s face down to hers; she spoke in quick, short gasps, as though her breath were leaving her.

“I have given you my husband,” she said, “and I am going to

give you my child—my own boy. You are a noble woman. Oh, promise me, while God hears you speak, that you will be kind to my boy, and love him as your own?"

"I promise you that I will," she replied.

"Mamma, mamma!" cried a sweet, shrill little voice; and Daisy tried to raise her head. A faint flush came over her face.

"This is my boy," she said.

The next minute he came into the room, his little face beaming with joy at the thought that he should see his mamma.

"My own mamma!" he cried, springing to her, while Sir Clinton hushed him with quiet words.

"My darling!" said poor Daisy.

She drew him to her; she kissed the sweet, flushed face—ah, with what speechless love! Her hands lingered on the sunny curls; her lips quivered. Ah, Heaven, what dying mothers suffer who leave behind them a little child!

"Clifton," she said, "will you love this lady?"

The boy took one glance at the pale, beautiful face of Lady May.

"I love you, mamma," he said, "better than all the world."

"I know; but will you love this lady, dear?"

"I will, if you tell me," he replied.

"I do tell you, darling. Love her, and be very kind to her; do all that she bids you."

The boy looked up with a sudden expression of fear.

"Where are you going, mamma?" he cried.

"My darling," said Daisy, "I am going home to heaven."

"Take me with you, mamma. I love you—no one else," he cried.

And Lady May, clasping him in her arms, kissed the fair little face, soothing him with sweet words. Then Daisy half raised herself, a sudden light came into her eyes, all her heart came in the strength with which she opened her arms and clasped the boy to her breast. All her long-repressed love, all the pain that might have been jealousy, all the sorrow of the long years, came out in that passionate cry:

"Oh, my boy! my boy! you must always love me best. I am your own mother—you must love me best."

Still holding him, as though no earthly force could take him from her, Daisy died; and the same sunbeam that touched her hair with gold brightened the curls of her little son—the same light that lingered over the mother's dead white face, seemed to kiss the rosy mouth of the living child.

"Caro," she had whispered, an hour before she died, "will you bury me in that pretty cemetery at Leville, near the grave of that man who died of love—you remember?"

"I remember," said Sir Clinton.

And, true to his promise, he buried Daisy there.

CHAPTER LVIII.

AFTER FIVE YEARS.

FIVE years have passed since Daisy was buried, and one fine evening in July there was a very pretty picture to be seen on the

lawn at Eastwold. Sir Clinton Adair was giving his little daughter her first lesson in walking. Miss Lockwood, who looked on most anxiously, never wearied of giving him all kinds of caution, while Lady Adair sat watching the performance with a bright and charming smile.

Down went baby on the soft, green grass. Lady May laughed; Miss Lockwood cried out; Sir Clinton hastened to raise her.

"No one can learn to walk straight," said Lady May, "without many falls."

The words seemed to impress Sir Clinton. He gave the laughing, rosy baby to Miss Lockwood, and sat down by his wife's side.

"Where is Clifton?" he asked.

"I can hear him," she replied. "He is practicing with the bow and arrow that I bought him, and he has a grand idea of shooting. Here he is."

A beautiful boy came running toward her.

"My darling mamma," he cried, "see how well I can aim."

Lady May laid down her book and took the liveliest interest in his attempts at archery. She was so kind, so gentle, so patient, that after a time he flung his arms round her neck and kissed her with a kind of rapture.

"You are so good to me," he said.

And she, looking up at the sweet summer sky, murmurs:

"I hope Daisy knows how dearly I love her boy."

The boy himself has not forgotten his mother; he has some memory of a pure, sweet face, and dying arms that clasped him—of a passionate cry that was followed by terrible silence; he has a vague memory of love that was deeper and sweeter than any he has known since. He dimly remembers how some one used to kiss him and weep passionate tears over him. He has been to the cemetery at Leville, and they told him that his mother lay there. He glanced, with puzzled eyes, at the beautiful face of Lady May.

"You are my mamma now," he said; and she replied that, Heaven blessing her, she would be a good mother to him.

Three years elapsed between Daisy's death and Sir Clinton's second marriage. The ceremony had been a very quiet one, and they had gone straight home to Eastwold. Then they led a most useful, happy life. Sir Clinton became a man of note and fame. They had but one little daughter. As Daisy had said, there was some justice in it—Lady May had Sir Clinton, but her son was heir.

They talk of her in low tones, and dwell lovingly on her memory. Once the boy gathered a simple white field-daisy, and brought it to his father. He wondered much why Sir Clinton kissed it with tears in his eyes, telling him that he must never again gather a daisy, for, when they were gathered, they faded and died.

He is a happy man; but in the solemn hours of twilight, and the mystic hours of night, he often heard these words:

"You held a daisy in your hand, and you have carelessly flung it away."

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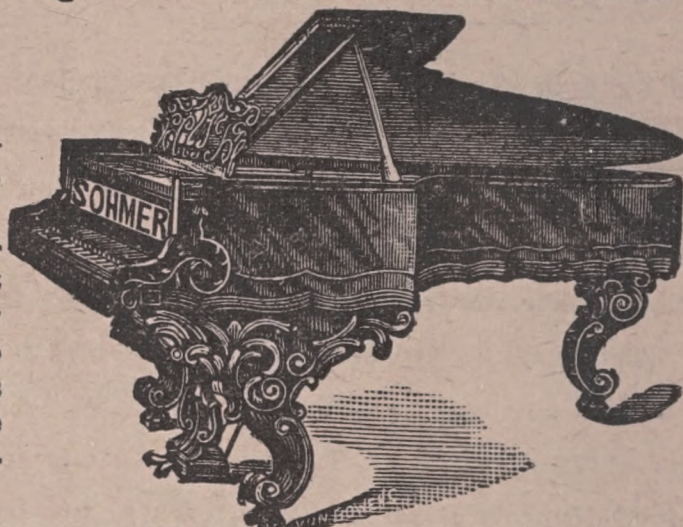
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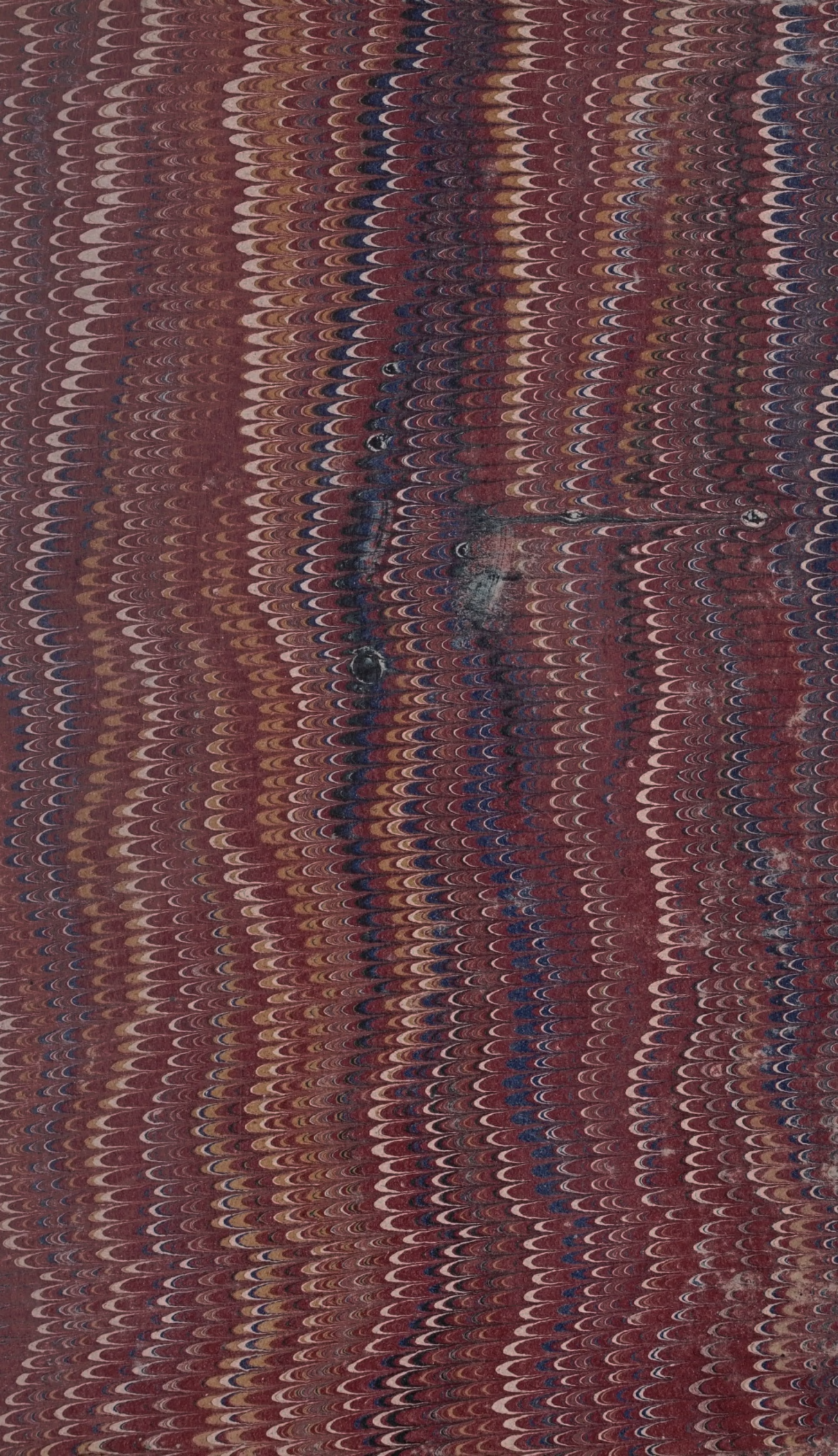
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